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Bitter Sweet

June, 1980

The Magazine of Maine's Hills & Lakes Region Vol. III, No. 7



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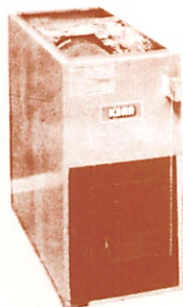
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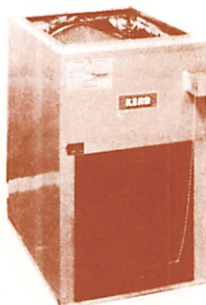
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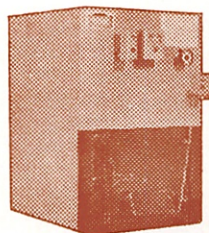
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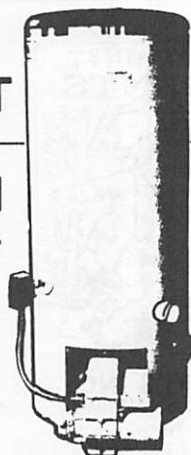
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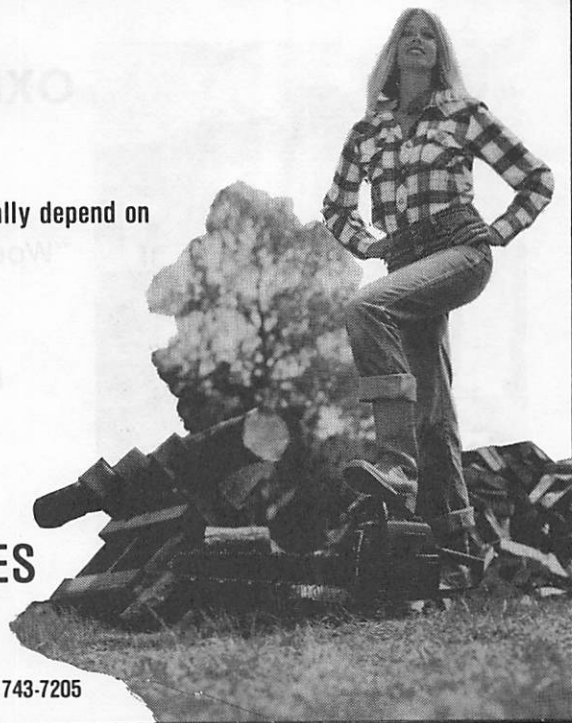
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as does the anamorphous trunk,
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(turned finally infecund)
divulging deep a heart maroon, arcane;
The hoary tree consummates its life, at last,
as aromatic memory, floated up
a wisp of subtle smoke
and merest hint of evanescent flavor
in a crust of
applewood-baked bread.

Nadya Bernard
Kingfield



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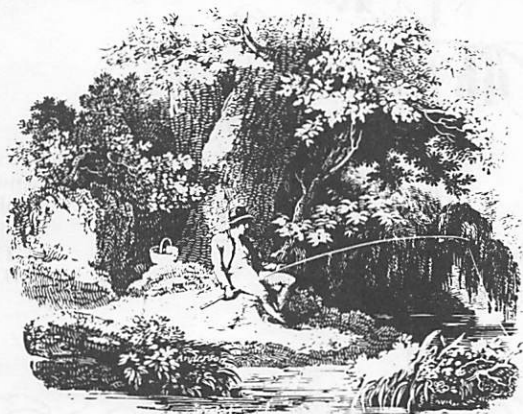
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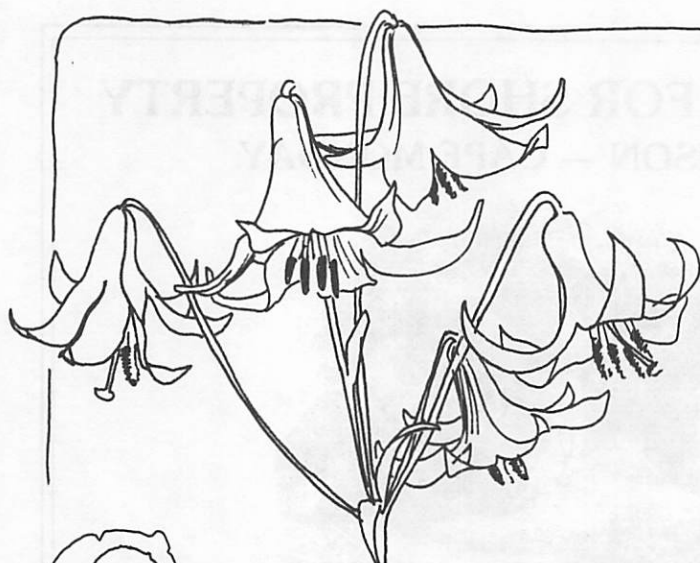


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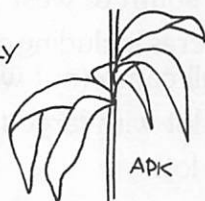


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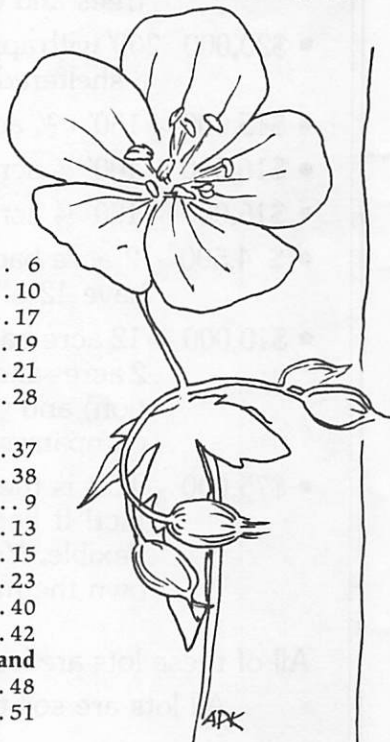
Illustrations: Allison Kenway: pg. 4; Photography: Netti Cummings Maxim, Cover & pgs. 10, 12, 15, 51; Blaine Mills, pg. 19; Tom Stockwell, pg. 64.

Crossroads

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WILD GERANIUM



BitterSweet Views

Tonight as I was watering our newly acquired beef cattle in the midst of one of John Meader's buzzing hail storms I took some small comfort in the proposition put forth by Meader this month (page 23) that the bothersome, biting black fly and mosquito may, in time, fall victim to modern technology's sterile male and phony female. Things this evening were so thick that the only way Michael and I could manage to have our 18-month-old daughter anywhere near content out-of-doors was to strap her into her little wooden swing and keep her traveling at a fast enough clip that the critters couldn't find her. Of course, we set ourselves up as easy prey in the process, establishing a network of relief parallel to the one which the cattle appear to provide for us.

BitterSweet

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As Meader mentions in his essay, it has been suggested by at least one scientist that farmers who sleep alongside their cattle are less likely to contract malaria than those who don't since, faced with a choice between cow and human, the mosquito will choose the cow every time. Our experience this year would suggest that you don't have to sleep with your animals to benefit from the bug relief they can provide. With three cows, three sheep and two pigs on the premises our farmstead is going at its fullest force to date and we have found, to our delight, that our problem with bugs this year has been far less severe than the one being faced by neighbors without animals. It's something to ponder as you learn from Meader all you'll ever need to know to make it through the spring and summer onslaught.

Bugs or no bugs, Maine continues to be billed as The Playground of the Nation—a phrase that's likely to elicit mixed emotions during these dwindling days of magnificent May preceeding the official opening of the tourist season. We've all used it. But how many of us are aware that it was not coined by some clever state official or advertising executive but by a crusty Maine Guide who herself was billed as "the world's most famous female fisherman?" Cornelia Crosby, a handsome six foot Diana of the northwoods, is featured in Edith Labbie's folktale, "Fly Rod, Queen of the Anglers" (page 6). A century ago, the tough and talented outdoorswoman waged war on the traditional tabus of the time and established herself as the state's number one publicity agent in the process.

Among the areas touted by more contemporary champions of the state's natural offerings are Lake Christopher in Bryant Pond, site of Sunday sailing regattas throughout the summer (story page 19); and Indian Pond in Greenwood where Sandra Dunham spent many a sultry summer day down on her knees searching for flatfish (story page 21).

Kate Gregg of Otisfield contributes this month's lamb recipes (page 28) and Walter Maxim and Mary Parsons send along some fascinating stories of the civil way (pages 10 and 17.)

This month's fiction selection, "Eliza and the Lost Ox" by Harry Walker, tells a tale of female ingenuity and determination that would do Fly Rod, herself, proud.

Sandy Wilhelm

Folk Tales

"Fly Rod" Queen of the Anglers

Edith Labbie



Cornelia Crosby, born in Phillips in 1854, was an expert fly caster, crack marksman, and first class sports reporter of Maine outdoor activities.

Western Maine is known throughout the world as a paradise for fishermen and hunters. The lure of our fish and game continues to draw sportsmen to this part of the state.

Whether visitors take home their prize or not, they appreciate the resinous fragrance of the pine groves bordering our lakes, trout pools set like jewels among lush green ferns and above all the special fellowship experienced when like-minded people rest their weary bodies around campfires and spin yarns.

The best tales are true ones and the story of "Fly Rod, Queen of the Anglers" is one that old time guides in the Lake Pennessseewassee area enjoyed retelling to new audiences.

Cornela T. Crosby, known as "The Most Famous Female Fisherman in the World" was also Maine's first volunteer publicity agent. She held the No. 1 license for a Maine Guide and blazed new trails for women. She was a star of national Sportsmen's shows, a crack marksman and was the first to call Maine "The Playground of the Nation."

Although she made her headquarters in the Rangeley area she spread the fame of our fishing grounds throughout the country and even to Europe so the waters of Oxford County came in for their fair share of praise.

She did all this at a time when her Victorian peers were sewing fine seams in the parlor. She was born in 1854 in the pretty village of Phillips beside the Sandy River. No one dreamed that Lemuel and Thirza's baby girl would turn into a tomboy and spend a great part of her life along the streams of Maine.

At the end of the Revolutionary War her great grandfather on her mother's side, Ezekiel Porter, a Colonel on George Washington's staff, took his soldier's pay as a claim in a fertile river interval which he named picturesquely, Farmington.

Her father died when she was two years old. In due time she was sent to the St. Catherine's School in Augusta, an Episcopal finishing school for young ladies.

After her graduation she worked in a Farmington bank, a prestigious position for a young lady of those times. But like a wild plant that cannot survive cultivation, the bright cheeked girl began to droop and fade. Her family doctor tried many medications and finally prescribed "a large dose of outdoors."

Nature turned out to be a better healer than the doctor was. As she roamed through the forests Cornela reclaimed her health and the color returned to her cheeks.

She walked for many miles along the trails in the Rangeley region. Hunters and fishermen were often surprised and startled to encounter a young lady travelling alone in that remote wilderness.

They had no need for concern because Cornela not only trained herself to be an expert fly caster but she easily attended to the menial tasks involved in camping in the open air.

She was a handsome six foot Diana of the northwoods. What's more she was as skilled with a rifle as she was with a fly rod.

She once accepted a challenge to shoot in competition against the famous Annie Oakley of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Her marksmanship was so impressive that the Winchester Rifle Company presented her with a fine 38-55 caliber rifle.

Scorning the restrictive conformities expected of ladies of her time she made it a point to remove many of the taboos that hampered the freedom of her sex. She constantly urged women, for their own sake, to spend more time in the great out of doors and to be companions to men but not their competitors.

"I don't believe in women's rights as such," she said, "because I think too much of the men. There are certain fields of endeavor to which each of the sexes is suited."

Her enthusiasm for fishing got a lot of vacationers, male and female, to leave their rocking chairs on the hotel verandas and enjoy the pleasure of hiking, fishing and hunting.

The hotel managers soon realized that a professional lady fisherman and guide was a real drawing card for sportsmen.

Cornela took many vacationers with bulging purses and taut nerves to lakes, streams and groves where they found peace and happiness. In exchange for room and board at hotels, she gave fly casting demonstrations, took fishing parties out and guided hunters.

"Fly Rod" the only name many people knew her by, was soon in great demand. Using this affectionate title as her pen name, she turned out a weekly sporting new column in the Phillips newspaper. The idea caught on and soon she was writing similar news letters for Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago papers. She was a one woman ambassador for the lakes and forests of Maine. In all she sent more than 100,000 pictures and captions about Maine outdoor life throughout the country and to Europe as well. One source credited her with being responsible for at least 5,000 visitors to Maine in a single year. As a volunteer publicity writer she coined the phrase, "Maine, the Playground of the Nation."

In 1895 she said to the Vice President of the Maine Central Railroad, "If you want some permanent publicity, I know how to go about getting it."

That sounded good to the gentleman so he gave her a free hand. She came up with an innovative idea. Into a box car she loaded stuffed game animals, living trout and the materials for a log cabin. Outside the box car was a large banner urging folks to visit beautiful Maine. The whole outfit, including herself, went to the Sportsmen's Exhibition at the Madison Square Garden in Manhattan.

The spectators got a belt out of the tame little black bear named Joe. They admired the salmon and trout from Maine hatcheries swimming in a pool and were thrilled by a fine mounted specimen of deer and moose. But the center of all attraction was "Fly Rod" herself.

In her green leather skirt and jacket designed by Worth of Paris and bright red sweater and tam-o-shanter, she was worth looking at! A few prudish eyebrows were raised because her skirt was all of seven inches above the floor! That was one more way in which she struck a blow for womanhood. "Fly Rod" proved that nothing terrible would happen if women wore clothes suited to an active life. She cared not a fig for those who thought such a sight was demoralizing.

At first the sportsmen attending the show figured that she was simply a window dressing, but when "Fly Rod" demonstrated her skill with a

fly rod they were astounded. After she returned she was the toast of Maine.

For many years thereafter she was a focal point for all the large sportsmen shows.

When she appeared before the Maine Legislature in Augusta in 1897, in support of a bill for testing and licensing guides, her sensible recommendations impressed the law makers. The bill passed easily.

Prior to this, anyone, even if they had a maximum of confidence and minimum of knowledge was allowed to guide a party of sports. Out-of-state businessmen coming here protested the high price asked for poor services. This bill protected them.

In recognition of her work in promoting Maine, "Fly Rod" was presented with the No. 1 Maine Guide license, much to her surprise.

She was always in love with the Maine forests and lakes and her writing glowed with her affection.

It was customary, in the day of the large resort hotels, for parties of Indians to camp nearby and sell handwoven baskets. They liked and respected "Fly Rod" who could be as self sustaining in the woods as they.

She knew that it was a great honor when she was invited to participate in an Indian wedding at Orono. Josephine Newell, niece of the famed Indian hunter, Joe Frances, was to be the bride of John Ranco, a young and honorable brave. "Fly

Rod" was the maid of honor. The best man was Louis Sockalexes, the famous Indian baseball player from Maine.

The ceremonies were attended by 400 big chiefs and other dignitaries. The wedding procession was led by a sinewy old hunter wearing a head dress of eagle feathers.

At the reception held in the town hall, "Fly Rod" and Sockalexes made a handsome sight when they waltzed together. She was as tall and graceful as a birch tree and he still had the appearance of nobility.

When some of the Indians muttered because a white woman was taking part in the ceremony Sockalexes replied, "Her face is white but her heart is the heart of a brave."

For many years "Fly Rod" kept on writing about the good life in the Maine woods.

When she was about 50 years old a knee injury limited her mobility. For the rest of her life she used crutches or a cane. She was most grateful for the loving care bestowed upon her by the nuns in the Portland hospital where she was treated. At that time she embraced Catholicism.

During her long convalescence she conceived the idea of building a church at Oquossoc, a lovely little hamlet just north of Rangeley. Many of her influential friends expressed their fondness for her by contributing to the building fund.

She spent her later years in the little house in Phillips she and her mother had built. They called it



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St. Anthony's cottage in honor of her patron saint.

At the last, "Fly Rod" became a permanent resident of the Marcotte Home in Lewiston. Like a captive eagle, she still maintained her regal dignity until the end came in 1946, the day after her 92nd birthday.

"Fly Rod" led the chorus of eloquent voices who have sung and are still singing praises for Maine's outdoor life. □

Edith Labbie is a freelance journalist living in Bethel and frequent contributor to the Lewiston Sun Journal.

PHILOSOPHIC OBSERVATION

First Mainer: "Fellow at the fillin' station near talked my ear off this mawnin'."

Second Mainer: "Know the one you mean. He never had a thought his mouth couldn't use."

William Tacey
Pittsburg □

Can You Place It?



H.A. Hannaford of Kittery correctly identified last month's 'Can You Place It' as a picture of the bridge, dam and gate house at Welchville taken about 1900. He says the building to the left is a saw mill which burned soon after the photo was taken. The photo was kindly loaned by Jessie Thurlow of Mechanic Falls.

The May cover photo by Nettie Cummings of the magnificent waterfalls at Albany Basin also aroused considerable comment, with people mistakingly pinpointing location of the falls at sites ranging from Rumford to Fryeburg.



Moses Cummings and grandson, Walter Maxim, 1903

Recollections

CIVIL WAR TALES

My maternal grandfather, Moses Cummings, used to tell stories of the Civil War. Until now I have never written down any of them but, like most older people, I can remember quite well what was told to me 75 years ago. My grandfather was 28 years old in 1863 when he was drafted for service in the U. S. Army. The second battle of Bull Run was the first he was in.

His wife died late that fall, leaving two children: Eugene and Emma. He didn't hear of her death until February, whereupon he asked for a discharge, but his request was not granted. At that time, Moses was classed

as a Division Teamster. He drove a 6-mule team hauling food, water, supplies and ammunition, besides feed for the animals.

The driver rode in a saddle on the near wheel mule (as those next to the wagon were called). A jerk line attached to one of the leaders, trained as a jerk-mule, would turn right or left, start and stop, according to the number of jerks on the line. Guess it was mostly a case of following-the-leader in the wagon train.

When it was time to camp, the mules were tied around the wagons and the drivers slept underneath. Blacksmith and cook wagons

were at the rear of the train.

In April, 1864, Grandfather was in the hospital with yellow fever. When he was able, he was offered the chance to be hostler for one of the officers, but he said he would rather be a foot soldier. His cousin, George Buck, who was drafted at the same time, used to carry his pack for him part of the time, as he was weak from his sickness. Buck was a big man, well able to carry two packs. He would eat his day's ration of hardtack and salt pork as soon as issued, saying he was going to have what he wanted once a day. He deserted, went to Canada, and never came back. They called it "going over Skedaddle Ridge."

Once Grandfather was issued a slice of salt pork with a teat on it and wouldn't eat it. Sometimes the men were not allowed to have a fire and would be forced to eat the pork raw.

One time after they had marched 2 nights and 3 days, Grandfather was assigned to picket duty. It was a very dark night. He put his hands over the muzzle of his rifle with his head resting on them. He was so tired he must have gone to sleep in that standing position. It was the custom for an officer to come around and call out: "10 of the clock and all is well," or whatever the particular hour was. The officer accused Grandfather of going to sleep since he didn't answer the call until the third time. Being caught asleep on picket duty was punishable by death before a firing squad. To defend himself, Grandfather told the officer it was so dark he had wanted to see if the officer could find him. The officer threatened to turn Moses in, but decided not to, the circumstances being as they were.

One day the troops didn't get their rations at all. They came to a place where hardtack had been dumped and was moldy. Grandfather scraped the mold off and later said he was so hungry it tasted as good as anything he had ever eaten.

Because some wells and streams had been poisoned, a scout would go on ahead and check the water. One time, the men came to a stream marked "safe." A dead mule laid in the water. Some of the soldiers were so thirsty they drank below the animal. Grandfather said he went above to drink and fill his canteen and had to hope there was nothing poisonous upstream.

The men carried blankets in their packs along with a haversack. When they camped

at night they would spread a canvas-like blanket on the ground. It was quite common to find a copperhead snake that had crawled under the blanket to get the warmth from their bodies.

Once a pig ran through the camp. Several soldiers chased it, one of whom managed, by falling full-length, to grab a hind leg just as the pig was crawling under a fence. A big Irishman whipped out a knife and skinned the animal in minutes. Roast pig was a welcome addition to the usually dull fare.

One time while in camp a party of soldiers went foraging for fresh meat. They had caught a number of sheep, tied their hind legs together in pairs and hung them across their mules' backs. A rider came galloping up to tell them there was a large camp of Rebels just over the ridge. They cut the sheep loose and lost no time getting back to camp in order to move the wagon train to a safer place.

Colonel Trojan, a Frenchman, was a member of my Grandfather's regiment. One day when he was feeling his best after a few shots of whiskey, some of the soldiers persuaded him to make a speech. He said, "The 17th Maine is one 'tarm' good regiment, one 'tarm' good fighting regiment, but me no like dem. Dey call me 'toe jam,' dey call me 'ole frog-eater,' me no like dem."

An officer rode by with a soldier tied by the thumbs to his saddle, walking close behind his horse. One of the soldiers cut the rope and ever after was known as "Guy roper."

When Confederate soldiers were within hollering distance, our soldiers would say, "Hey Johnnies, why don't you grease your behinds and slide into the Union?" I'm not sure "behinds" was the word they used.

One time they went by some peach orchards where there was a lot of fruit on benches with a sign: "Soldiers, help yourselves."

In places where people would try to keep them out, they would go in and shake the trees and do a lot of damage by breaking off limbs. Grandfather was with Sherman's Army when it marched from "Atlanta to the Sea" near the end of the war. From accounts I have read, many of the soldiers did things they should have been ashamed of, including rape and robbery. As they were marching by a house, a man shot a soldier from an upstairs window. The troops surrounded the house. When an officer ordered the man



Moses Cummings
after the Civil War

who fired the shot to come out, nobody showed themselves. Then the order was, "Women, children and old people, leave at once!" They went up on a knoll nearby and the house was set afire. When a man ran out, two soldiers grabbed him and threw him back into the burning building. When it was all aflame, the soldiers continued on their way.

One time a shell struck near Grandfather and exploded in a deep mudhole and he was left splattered with mud. The colonel asked where he'd been hit, and he said it looked as if he'd been hit all over.

At one point, Grandfather was wounded by a rebel bullet that went through the flesh of his right hip.

As the men were about to camp one night, a wheel was broken on one of the wagons. During the night the driver took off the broken wheel and exchanged it for a good one from the blacksmith's wagon, saying that the blacksmith had tools and could easily fix the broken wheel.

One of the drivers had five brown mules and a white one which was blind and deaf. Another driver had just the reverse: five white and one brown. An exchange was made so teams would be better matched. The recipient of the white one was a Frenchman, and when he found the new mule was blind and deaf, he was very displeased with the swap. He would say, "Damn whitey mule, can't see, no hear. Damn whitey mule."

After the fighting was over, Grandfather's was stationed near

Washington for several weeks. A salesman was making the rounds, selling ivory rings. He would put soldiers' initials and the name of their company on a diamond-shaped silver insert. The salesman claimed the rings were made from a rebel's shin-bone.

Another salesman had a cart guarded by a big bulldog chained near the door. He was selling suits of clothes. He offered to give any soldier a suit free if he dared to go into the cart and get it.

A big Irishman stepped up and said he wanted a suit. The man urinated on the dog and had no trouble picking out one of the best suits he could find.

Grandfather was never well after he came home, but he lived to be over 90. □

Walter Maxim
Paris Hill

You don't say ~~~~~*

PLACE NAMES

Western Maine appears to be well blessed with unique place names. They may indicate a street, a locality or a mountain within a town.

Hiram has its Tearcap (a mountain) and its Buttermilk district. Cornish has a Hussian Hill and Porter a Devil's Den.

The exact origin of these names is not always clear. Mt. Misery in Hiram challenges the imagination.

Fryeburg's Menotomy area arouses curiosity as does Fryeburg Harbor where there's not a ship or an ocean in sight.

Perhaps some Bridgton oldtimer can explain the origin of Pumpkin Valley.

Sebago has its Mud City, Mack's Corner and Backnippin'. A sign in East Sebago bears witness to the fact, telling us the where but not the why.

However, Brownfield has an area which bears a unique name, the origin of which has come down to us through word of mouth.

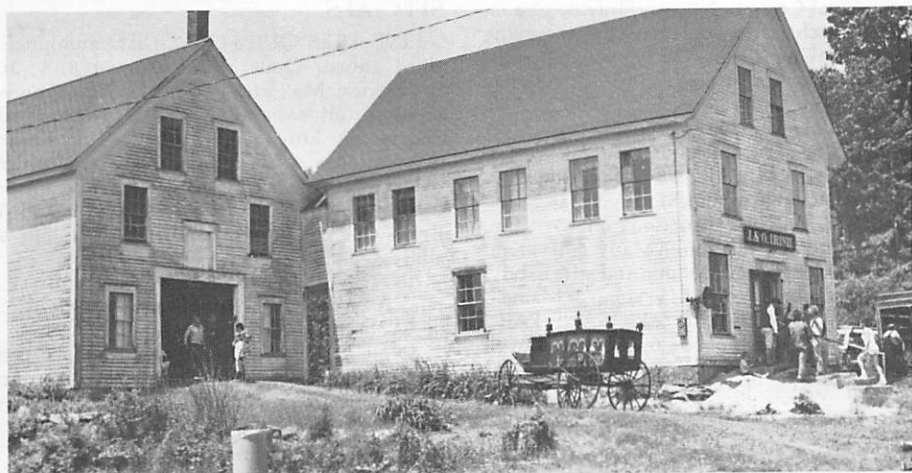
It is said that in the area of Brownfield where the Ten Mile Brook crosses the Pequawket Trail there once lived a man named Benson. His wife Dolly loved cats and possessed several of them. Mr. Benson did not share her affection for her feline friends.

Her frequent commands to "Let Tommy in or let Tabby out," all too often interrupted his periods of meditation by the fireside.

One day he solved his problem. He cut two holes in the kitchen door, a big one for the big cat and a little hole for the little cat.

His neighbors reacted with both amazement and amusement. And this spot of sylvan beauty on a pleasant mountain stream was spoken of for many years as CATHOLE!

Goings On



Hartford Heritage Day

The small village of Hartford will celebrate its Fifth Annual Hartford Heritage Day on Sunday, June 8th.

Day-long festivities will begin with a church service at 8:15 a.m. and will feature a parade, old-time fiddling, a horse show, a cross-cut sawing event and the "Baby Hartford" contest.

Heritage Day first took shape in 1976 when Lorraine Greig and others set out to find a Bicentennial celebration. The 1976 event blossomed, giving rise to the East Butterfield Militia, a marching band and color guard named in honor of the original township which was settled in the 1780's by Samuel Butterfield. The Militia, with Franklin Roy at its head, quickly organized into a drum and bugle corps outfitted with continental soldier costumes and authentic muskets. The group has gone on to perform all over the state and has won several awards.

A second offshoot of the first Heritage Day is the Hartford Heritage Society. Members of this small but energetic group have tackled several projects including the re-publication of a book (**In The North Woods of Maine**) written by a former Hartford resident; the opening of a museum; and, this year, construction of a handsome heritage quilt. A blue-ribbon winner at the Lewiston Fair, the quilt will be displayed with other quilts on June 8 at the Society's headquarters at the J & O Irish store museum. The building, which three years ago was donated to the society by Jimmy Irish, will house various exhibits on Heritage Day. The first floor contains a well as the railroad turnabout which once exited at Hartford. Also included in the and the third will soon house permanent archives.

The barn of the museum houses tools and mementoes of Hartford's past industries including the Hartford Cold Spring bottling plant and a brick-yard, as well as the railroad turnabout which once exhibited at Hartford. Also included in the exhibit will be the former surgical tools of the late Dr. Maxim, and an elegant tasseled horse-drawn hearse built in 1888.

Although the beauty contest & box social have been abandoned due to lack of interest, there will be games for children of all ages, including horseshoe-pitching, the old-fashioned game of quoits, and crosscut log-sawing.

The Heritage Society will be taking pre-orders for the Hartford Town History which is now being compiled. □

(Goings On continued)

SUMMER SALES

ANNUAL CRAFTS FAIR, Second Congregational Church, Norway, July 9, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Church craftspeople have been working all winter making patchwork toys and dolls, pillows, household items, and Christmas ornaments. Many specialties for children. Also candy, food, pie, bread and cheese tables. A luncheon will be served at noon.

INTERNATIONAL FAIR: Saturday, August 9, 2 p.m. (eye-catching costumes). Supper at 5 p.m. (International Menu). Auction at 7 p.m. (worthwhile items - no junk) Many craftsmen, games for children, fabulous food and gifts to buy. First Congregational Church, Fryeburg, Maine.

FIFTH ANNUAL ARTS & ARTISANS FAIR: Saturday, August 16, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Lovell Library & Old Village School, Rte. 5 Lovell.

SUMMER SALE: July 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Harrison Ladies Aid of the Calvary Church, Harrison.

ANNUAL SUMMER SALE of the First Congregational Church of Bridgton, July 9th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the vestry.

GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME 1980: Annual Summer Fair put on by Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, North Windham, Maine. Thursday, July 10, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Friday, July 11, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, July 12, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

TOURS

A **HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR** of Bridgton area homes will be conducted August 10, 1980 from 1-6 p.m. Homes with significant history and architecture will be featured.

A **CREATIVE LIVING TOUR** will follow on August 17, 1980 from 1-6 p.m. This tour will focus

on individual creativity and inventiveness in a variety of homes in the Bridgton area.

Both tours are sponsored by the Stevens Brook Heritage Trust.

SPECIALS

PINE TREE QUILTERS GUILD announces its third annual Quilt Show, August 8, 9, 10 in Brunswick, Me., at Bowdoin College. The well-known quilt designers, authors, teachers, Beth and Jeffrey Futchon, will lecture on Saturday evening, Aug. 9. For more information, and entry blank for those wishing to enter a quilt, please write to Shirley Voight, Old Portland Rd., Brunswick, Me. 04011, and enclose a long, self-addressed stamped envelope.

ANNUAL SILVER TEA: Thursday, July 17, 2-4 p.m. at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Kemp Pottle, Rt. 85, Webbs Mills, Maine.

ANNUAL LIBRARY BOOK SALE: Opening July 23 at the Casco Library and continuing through the summer on all days the Library is open.

ETC.

MOVIES: The Magic Lantern Theatre, 69 Main St., Bridgton. Phone 647-5033 for Schedule. Varying Admission Fees.

FARE SHARE CO-OP STORE: Natural foods, herbs, spices, teas, bread, stone-ground flour, dried fruit, cheese, organically-grown beef, tofu, nut butters, and much more. 8 Tannery St., Norway (in the former Norway Farmers Union). New hours: Mon. & Sat. 10-5; Thurs. & Fri. 10-7.

COMING UP

AGRICULTURAL SELF-RELIANCE CONFERENCE: presented by Natural Organic Farmers Association (NOFA) Aug. 1, 2, 3, University of New Hampshire, Durham. For more information,

write NOFA Conference, Province Rd., Stafford, NH 03844, or call Susan Bradbury at (603) 659-2747.

THE MAINE POTATOES - BY BRITT WOLFE



Peddler Page

FOR SALE: Authentic hoosier kitchen cabinet, all attachments, needs paint, \$125. Write Bitter-Sweet, RFD Box 21, Buckfield, Me. 04270.

Ayah

letters to the editor

COLBY FAMILY

Written and read by W. W. Maxim at the reunion of the Colby Family, Paris, Maine, August, 1914.



THE COLBY FAMILY

Friends long parted meet together,
Kindred souls from far and near,
Uncles, aunts and many cousins,
In a celebration here.

They have come from farms and factories,
Hills and plains and forests wide,
Villages and noisy cities,
And they mingle side by side.

In this hospitable mansion
And beneath these branching trees,
Bending down with blushing apples
Swinging in the summer breeze.

Here the old folks still remaining,
Here a sturdy son abides,
With his partner always busy,
Does her stint and some besides.

Children, too, with ruddy faces
Drive the cows from pastures green,
Feed the calves and pigs and chickens,
Ride the go-cart times between.

Here are grain crops rustling, ripening,
Grown from rich and well-tilled soil;
Here the fields of waving sweet corn
Tell the hours of patient toil.

Brothers, sisters of this home-man
Come to talk of memories dear;
Of the joys and fears of childhood
And their parents still revere.

One a mason from the Bay State
Comes from building chimneys tall;
Often seen in new-built houses,
Also at the Mason's Hall.

One a widow with small children
Faithful to her charge remains,
Looking always for their welfare
Rather than for worldly gains.

And the others—heaven bless them,
They have never empty shelves,
They have children for a blessing,
Heaven helps those who help themselves.

Trials, griefs, and sad repining
Have been ours since last we met,
Yet we come with hope still shining
And all misery forget.

May we bear life's burdens calmly,
Looking oft with hope ahead,
Till we meet beyond the river
Where no parting tears we shed. □



FATHER

I would like to have this poem printed in your **BitterSweet** magazine. It was written by my dad many years ago. I would like to share this poem with everyone. My dad has written many poems and this is one of my favorites. We have been getting this magazine for two years now, and we enjoy it very much.

Gilbert M. York
Mechanic Falls

GIVE DAD A BREAK

Give Dad a break low for many years,
He has borne life's burdens 'midst smiles and tears
In the mine, in the mill, and behind the plough,
And we deem he has earned his playtime now.
On Western plains amidst summer's heat
He has herded the cattle and garnered the wheat,
In northern Maine 'midst the winter's snow
He has laid the pine and the hemlock low.
He has driven the rapids white with foam
To maintain fireside and home.
And he's spent his earnings for bread and meat
And in buying shoes for little feet.
Dad was human, like other men,
He longed for pleasure and now and then
With Ma and the kids in the Model T,
He road through the mountains or down
by the sea,

And when some gasoline they did burn
That helped make the wheels of industry turn.
Now Dad has grown old and near finished his race,
Young blood of the Nation must step in his place.
Place Dad and Ma now behind the wheel
Of a new V-8 or an Oldsmobile.
Give them the price and let them ride
Don't chisel them down, but honor the man
Who first conceived the of the Townsend Plan
And the forge shall glow, the furnace war,
Prosperity shall dawn once more.
Time has left its impress upon Dad's brow,
His face is turned toward the sunset now.
A few short years and from old Dad
Will be but a memory sweet, yet sad
And while he lingers for his sake
Again I ask, give Dad a break.

Clarence W. Herrick
"The Poet of Promise Land"

BENJAMIN TWITCHELL

A few days before his demise, Benjamin Twitchell of South Paris composed the enclosed poem. I received this copy the day before he died. He was afraid it was not **BitterSweet** quality. A

letter of encouragement was in my typewriter when word of his loss reached me.

Ray Cotton
Hiram

The Passing of the Woodshed

We used to have a building
that was important to us all
It could have been a lean-to
or real fancy, wall to wall.

It was meant to hold the fuel
to be used from fall to spring
To keep the family snug and warm
through cold weather, winter brings.

It was a thing of beauty
with wood piled straight and true
There was always a corner, though
with just room enough for two.

At times the children played there
where we kept the dog at night
A jug of brew in the corner
for Dad when the time was right.

That old shed had a deeper meaning
than filling up with wood
It served as jail and courthouse
and held classes understood.

When son was smart and sassy
and needed stern advice
That little house and a hickory stick
was all that would suffice.

When the boy was old enough to wonder
why girls were on his mind
It was time for Dad to talk with him
in the woodshed 'neath the pine.

When Junior found the energy
and didn't know what to do
Mom would say "I need some wood"
and a splitting he would go.

Those days were not of riots
or children hanging 'round
That old wood shed needed tending
and it kept the family sound.

It was really such a pity
and the downfall of us all
When they found that oil would burn as well
and no trouble to install.

The old woodshed was dismantled
oil barrels took its place
Cold and dark they stand there
the woodshed lost its place.

We never will forget the days
when woodsheds were sublime
For they meant so much in days gone by
to keep the family mine.

Benjamin Twitchell
1980

South Paris Rebel

by Mary H. Parsons

In the maple-shaded park on High Street, South Paris, opposite the post office, stands a monument to the South Paris soldiers who died in the Civil War. The 1868 **Town Report** lists the names of all other soldiers from South Paris who fought in "The War For The Union." Over 200 names are listed. But little is known of another Civil War veteran, a South Paris son who fought in the Confederate Army. Reading through an old family diary for the year 1862, I came across the following entry:

March 26, 1862: Heard that Sewell Parsons joined the rebel army and was taken prisoner.

This aroused my curiosity and taking Lapham's **History of Paris** in hand, I looked up Cousin Sewell. Isaac Sewell Parsons was born in South Paris, on Oct. 12, 1825, the son of Col. Henry Rust Parsons and Betsey Gross, and the grandson of William Parsons, one of the original settlers of Norway. I was later to find out that he attended Hebron Academy and even taught there, before moving to Miami, Missouri.

What it was that turned his eyes west we can only guess. He had older brothers, and so would probably not have inherited his father's farm and woolen manufacturing business. His sister, Sarah W. Parsons, had married W.I. Hewitt in 1841 and had settled in Miami, Missouri. (After she was widowed in 1848, Sarah Parsons Hewitt and her three children returned to South Paris, where she died in 1906). Sewell had a young uncle on his father's side who had moved to Miami in the 1840's. Whatever the reasons, Sewell Parsons left Paris in 1847 and headed west. He went first to Indiana and later Kentucky, and then up the Missouri River by boat to Miami. At first he taught school there, but later turned to farming.

On May 29, 1850, Sewell returned to South Paris, married Catherine Hill, and took her back west with him. The 1850 Federal Census of Miami, lists Isaac Sewell Parsons, age 24, a farmer, with real estate worth \$3000. He owned nine slaves—5 adults and 4 children. Samuel W. Williams, age 22, a laborer born in Kentucky, was either employed by Cousin Sewell or boarding with him and wife Catherine.

The Federal Agricultural Census tells us that Sewell owned 200 acres of "improved land" and 200 acres of "unimproved land." He raised 2000 bushels of Indian corn, 250 of wheat, 40 of oats, and 100 of potatoes. He harvested 7 tons of hay and 5 tons of hemp. He owned 11 horses, 2 mules, 8 cows, 4 oxen, 30 other cattle, 12 sheep, and 100 swine.

Ten years later, on the eve of the Civil War, the 1860 Federal Census finds Sewell and wife Catherine the parents of four children—Flora, age 9; Fannie, age 6; Betty, age 3; and Emma, age 1. Ichabod Lufts, 57, a gardner born in Maine, is living with them. Cousin Sewell still has nine slaves, but now owns fewer women (3, as opposed

to 5 in 1850) and no children. His real estate is valued at \$13,000, and his personal estate is worth \$10,000.

Jan. 18, 1860: Heard last eve of the burning of Sewell Parsons' house, Miami, Mo. The most of the clothing and part of the furniture were saved. The loss is reported three or four thousand dollars.

When I first read this entry in the family diary, I pictured Cousin Sewell and his family homeless and faced with poverty. But this was not the case. The fire occurred eight months before the 1860 Federal Census was taken, and while it was undoubtedly a traumatic experience for the family and a financial blow as well, it left Cousin Sewell far from destitute. His combined real estate and personal estate in the 1860 Census totaled \$23,000. He had done well in the thirteen years since he left Maine.

In the 1860 Agricultural Census, Sewell owns an impressive array of animals—17 horses, 5 mules, 14 cows, 9 oxen, 30 other cattle, and 100 swine. He now owns 400 acres of improved land and 250 acres of unimproved land. He is raising 5000 bushels of Indian corn, 500 of oats, 100 of potatoes, and 15 of peas/beans. He raised no wheat. Sixty tons of hay were harvested and 30 tons of hemp. Butter production has doubled from 200 lbs. in 1850 to 400 lbs. in 1860. Cousin Sewell was indeed prospering. But then came the Civil War.

During the Civil War, Missouri was one of those States whose sympathies were divided. Both Confederate and Union troops from Missouri fought in the War, and the town of Miami had soldiers in both armies. Miami was located in Saline County, and one third of the population of Saline County were slaves. In the 1860 Presidential Election, not a single vote was cast for Lincoln in Saline County. Nevertheless, despite the secession of a number of Southern States, Union feeling was strong in Saline County until Lincoln called for volunteers to suppress "the Rebellion." The threat to use force against the ceded States quickly turned most of the county into Confederate sympathizers. Saline County was under Union control in 1862 and 1863, with a Federal garrison operating in Miami from time to time. But that control was shaky. Isolated incidents of violence against both Union and Confederate sympathizers were not uncommon throughout the War.

In the summer of 1861 when Federal troops took control of the State capitol, the retreating State troops took along 12,000 kegs of gunpowder which was hidden on different farms in Saline County, "nearly all of it passing finally into the service of the Confederacy...Ex-Senator Parsons of Miami (Cousin Sewell) successfully concealed about thirty kegs of this powder in his hog-pen, in a corner of it where he had prepared a sort of bed for the hogs, and under this hog-bed of straw and

fodder the thirty kegs of powder were buried" (from the **History of Saline County**). (In mid December, Isaac Sewell Parsons and 600 others, mostly from Saline County, formed a regiment which was planning to join General Sterling Price's Confederate Army. The men marched 40 miles the first day, camping at Blackwater Creek, Mo. A Federal force about 2000 to 3000 strong managed to surround them that night, and in the morning the entire regiment was compelled to surrender. Sewell Parsons was one of the lucky ones who managed to escape. The **History of Saline County** gives this account of his escape: "...Yanke shrewdness saved him from capture. He ran a little ways out and laid in the high grass, and thus escaped."

Cousin Sewell re-enlisted in 1864, and was made a first Lieutenant. He was with General Price in the retreat to Louisiana. To him fell the task of surrendering Slayback's Regiment in June of 1865 at Shreveport, Louisiana. He stayed, and surrendered his troop, while his superior officers fled to take sanctuary in Mexico. It could not have been easy.

On June 14, 1865, Lt. Isaac Sewell Parsons, commander of Co. H, Slayback's Regiment, and a prisoner of war, gave his "solemn parole of honor" to the Union authorities at Shreveport, Louisiana, and he was allowed to return home.

We do not know what shape the farm was in when he returned. But we do know that by 1870, he was back on his feet financially after the devastation of the Civil War. The 1870 Census data on Sewell Parsons is interesting. The value of his real estate has dropped from \$13,000 in 1860

to \$8000 in 1870, but he is solvent and running a functioning farm. His personal estate has dropped from \$10,000 in 1860, to \$4250 in 1870. This is understandable, since the slaves who probably made up the bulk of his 1860 personal estate valuation were now free.

A fifth daughter had been born to Cousin Sewell in 1869. He was to have no more children—no sons. John D. Parsons, a 23 year old cousin who had been raised in South Paris, had joined the family and was probably a big help to the now 44 year old Cousin Sewell. He now owned 280 acres of improved land, and in 1869 raised 4000 bushels of Indian corn, 1400 of winter wheat, 300 of oats, 50 of Irish potatoes, 5 of sweet potatoes, 3 of clover seed, 15 of other grass seed and orchard products worth \$625. Seventy-five tons of hay were harvested. He owned 6 horses, 3 mules, 5 cows, 2 oxen, 10 other cattle, 2 sheep, and 35 swine. After the War, hemp production ceased to be important in Saline County, and the emphasis shifted to corn and wheat production.

In 1876, Sewell Parsons was elected Senator from the Ninth District to the Missouri Legislature. He served from 1876 to 1880, and was Chairman of the Committee on Enrolled Bills. According to the **History of Saline County**, he served diligently and well. "At the close of each session, the Senate passed him a vote of thanks for his careful and laborious work in the committee."

The 1880 Federal Agricultural Census, taken while Cousin Sewell was in the State Legislature, shows farm production down, as would be expected. Unfortunately the 1890 Federal Census

Cont. on pg. 20

No. 737

I, the undersigned. Prisoner of War, belonging to the Army of the Trans-Mississippi Department, having been surrendered by General E. Kirby Smith, U. S. A., Commanding said Department, to Major General F. R. S. Canby, U. S. A., Commanding Army and Division of West Mississippi, do hereby give my solemn PAROLE OF HONOR, that I will not hereafter serve in the Armies of the Confederate States, or in any military capacity whatever, against the United States of America, or render aid to the enemies of the latter, until properly exchanged in such manner as shall be mutually approved by the respective authorities.

Residence

Saline County, Mo

Done at

Shreveport, La

this 14th day of June, 1865.

Approved:

Isaac Sewell Parsons
C. S. A.
Commissioners.

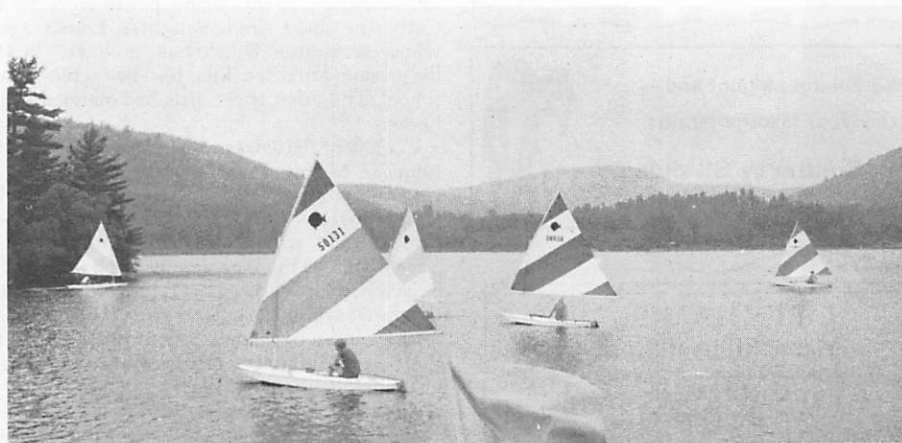
The above named officer will not be disturbed by the United States Authorities, as long as he observes his parole, and the laws in force where he resides.

GEO. L. ANDREWS,

Brig. Gen., U. S. A. and Provost Marshal General.

Copy of Isaac Sewell Parson's parole paper from the Confederate Army bearing his signature.

Heading Out



Breezing Along

by Blaine Mills

When a land-locked Mainer from Oxford County thinks of sailing, he usually thinks of the Maine coastline, windjammers, schooners and yachts. The fact is a lot of sailing takes place inland on our many lakes and ponds. Sailing is attractive to many people for its beauty, solitude, and challenge—not to mention the fact that there's no fuel necessary.

For those skippers who would like to try something different, there is the North Pond Regatta every Sunday afternoon in July and August, sponsored by the North Pond Sunfish Association in the Town of Woodstock near Locke Mills. The Association is a unique, low-key group of one-design boat owners who pay no dues and win no prizes. They race just for the fun of it.

About 1972 Walton Hathaway sweet-talked most of the sailboat owners in the area into a race. A good time was had by all and soon the event became a weekly regatta. The Association has had its ups and downs over the years, but it manages to survive through the continuing participation of its members. Although visiting skippers are welcomed and other design boats are accommodated, the real race is always among the Sunfish skippers, a casual sportsmanlike lot.

Late one Sunday afternoon, I was pulling up the regatta buoys about an hour and a half after the regatta had finished. While I was tackling the third buoy, two women sailed up and, in an incredible show of spirit, shouted at me to leave the marker so they could finish the race.

Racing skippers range from veterans like Walt Hathaway, Al Wescott and Bethel's Steve Wight to the person taking the helm for only the third or fourth time. The veterans happily help out any newcomers.

At its annual picnic every year, the Association has always voted down national affiliation in order to keep the regatta on a local, all-fun level which discourages the high point hot-shot on the national circuit.

On any nice, breezy Sunday afternoon this summer, you can bet the fleet—whether three boats or 20—will be out on North Pond. If you care to join in the confusion, the only requirement for entry is that you be able to rig your boat and sail to the starting buoys. When the starting gun sounds, should you find yourself sailing in the wrong direction, simply come about and follow the fleet. If you're lucky, they'll be sailing on the mark.

Blaine Mills sent this from his home in Locke Mills.

LACONIC ANSWER

Visitor to boss of shoe factory: "How many people work here?"
Boss: "Bout half."

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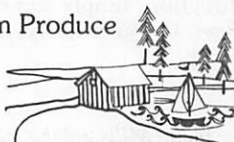


Main St. - Harrison
583-4266

Village Tie-Up

Shop By Land or By Water

Meats - Fresh Farm Produce
Beer and Wine
Gas



(Cont. from page 18)

was destroyed by fire. In the 1900 Census, Cousin Sewell (now 74 years old) is listed as a farmer owning his farm free of mortgage. Real estate and personal estate values are no longer listed. The only other occupants of his house were his wife Catherine and a single daughter, Emma, age 39, whose occupation is listed as "milliner." In 1881, his second daughter, Ella, has died while away at school. The other three girls had married and left home.

On July 8, 1910, Isaac Sewell Parsons died at his home in Miami. He was 84 years old. His wife Catherine had died three years earlier. Unfortunately the old family diary had ended on July 30, 1864, with no further mention of Cousin Sewell. Before the War, family ties had been close. Sewell had left Paris in 1847. He returned in 1850 to court and marry Catherine Hill. Scattered jottings in an old family account book show that the Sewell Parsonses returned at least twice for visits before the Civil War.

Received of Sewell Parsons Sept. 22nd (1856) forty dollars from D.R. Parsons.

June 10th, 1859 Mrs. Kate Parsons arrived home. Bought 3 books, a present to the boys from their father in Missouri.

Sewell Parsons left Oct. 3rd, 1859.

How did the family feel about their "Rebel" cousin after the War, one wonders. None of Sewell's brothers fought in the War, so it was not a case of brother against brother. We also know that by 1870, a 23 year old cousin, John D. Parsons, had left South Paris and joined Sewell's family in Missouri. (John D. Parsons, the son of Sewell's Uncle Daniel Parsons and Harriet Robinson, was born in Missouri in 1847. When he was 3 years old, his mother died and he was sent back to live with his mother's family in South Paris. He grew up on the Robinson-Parsons Farm, near Brimstone Corner, and did not leave there until several years after the Civil War). We also know that when Col. Henry Rust Parsons died in October of 1874, he left his estate first to his wife, and then equally to all his children, including Cousin Sewell. So family ties were not severed, despite the war. Did Sewell and Catherine ever return to visit their native Paris after the War? Perhaps the answer lies in some yet-to-be-read old family diary or journal.

Today, Miami, Missouri is a quiet little town of 150 people. It is not the bustling center of river travel and trade that it was in Cousin Sewell's day. I would like to visit someday and wander to the cemetery where Isaac Sewell and Catherine Hill Parsons are buried, so far from South Paris, Maine where they were born and grew up. □

Mary H. Parsons was prompted to compile this account after reading about Sewell in an old family diary belonging to Stephen R. Parsons of South Paris, her husband's great grandfather and a second cousin to Sewell. She located the diary among papers found at the old family farm in South Paris which was built in the 1790's and where she and her husband lived for a year in 1979.

Recollections



SUMMERS AT INDIAN POND

The caravan always started the day following the close of school each year. For months, my father dreamt of the day he could pack our husky dog, Keno, his three sons, only daughter, and last but not least his wife into our rickety car and head for Indian Pond to spend the warm summer days.

Indian Pond is a small, secluded body of water located in the town of Greenwood. In those days it was completely isolated, with but one camp on the pond other than our own. The forest was virtually untouched and there were two ways we could reach our camp at the very foot of the pond. We could perch precariously on a stack of blankets in the middle of an old rowboat or we could walk the narrow path down alongside the pond.

I never minded the transition from civilization to isolation. Boxes of food were packed; a roll of old blankets tied with a piece of clothesline rope; and my father's pack-basket filled with miscellaneous items such as pocket-book westerns. When the great day arrived, my father was up at the crack of

dawn. Mother would scurry around, trying to get the dog and kids in line, checking and double-checking, while Father sat in the car, honking the horn.

Every June, our arrival at camp was heralded by the inspection. We all fanned out in different directions to report on mice or squirrel damage over the winter months. Father threw open both doors leading to the old porch to "air the place out." Mother threw open the cupboards and commented on mice leavings.

The old wooden table with its bench was given a good dusting; the little black wood stove was wiped thoroughly. Father immediately went outside and inspected his supply of wood stored under the camp, while Mother, with the aid of complaining kids, dragged the bundle of blankets upstairs and made up the beds. Everyone slept in the open attic, with a minimum of discomfort.

As soon as Father declared the camp "liveable," we settled in for the summer. My brothers and I were never at a loss for entertainment. A big dam was near the

camp, and we delighted in balancing the old, rotten logs. Since my parents both worked all day at local mills, we kids were left to ourselves. There was an old rowboat which we paddled in the bog in front of the camp. On clear days, one could paddle softly and watch pickerel fanning their tails in the sunny waters. No matter how many times the hook and bait were tossed near, they never would bite. We adopted a flatfish for a pet and immediately named it "Egbert." All summer we watched it make its bed in the water and brush the sand away.

The only animal we did not attempt to domesticate was the moose. We were warned repeatedly, by my Mother, not to walk into Moose Cove. There the lily pads lay and there the mighty beast would be. Of course she had a point. Many evenings we sat quietly on the porch and watched a moose come out of the woods, thrust its head under the water and come up with a mouth full of dripping weeds. Moose never were a favorite of Mother's, anyway. One morning she decided to take an early walk to the spring and replenish our water supply. Meanwhile, a moose ambled into the front yard, looked around, and continued its sojourn in the direction of the spring. There was no way to warn Mother, so we held our breath. She soon returned, pail in hand, whistling a merry tune. We all looked at each other and chorused, "Did you see the moose?" I have never seen my mother's face turn as ashen or heard her voice as weak as when she asked, "What moose?" They had somehow missed each other completely.

One warm evening, my two older brothers decided to sleep on the porch. We were awakened about five o'clock in the morning by a blood-curdling scream. Father raced down the stairs to find two boys with their mouths open and eyes like saucers. They had heard a sound, opened their eyes, and looked into those belonging to a cow moose who had her head hanging over the porch railing.

Bear were also not uncommon. Occasionally, after we were all in bed, my father would identify the sounds of the night. We learned the sound of a bear with a cub, the cry of the cub, and the hoot of the owl. We always went to sleep to the sounds of tree toads and bullfrogs. One night, my father was forced to make a trip to the outhouse located in back of the camp. Just as he was seated, he reported later, he heard a bear—the closest bear he had ever heard.



Needless to say, the return trip to bed was hurried.

Eating at camp was simple. We lived on potatoes and on fish caught from the pond. Father always insisted on fish for breakfast before going off to work. A rare treat was a batch of hot biscuits on the weekends with warm applesauce to top them.

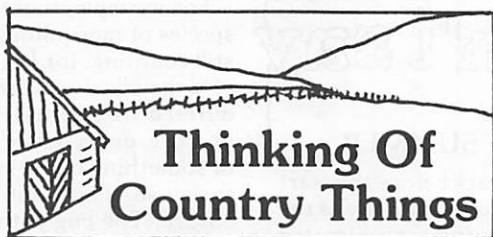
This was the day before environmentalist groups and government standards. Mother did our washing by standing on a makeshift deck and scrubbing the clothes with Fels Naptha soap and then rinsing them in the clear pond water. We washed ourselves in the pond; our baths were in the swimming beach (bloodsuckers and all) situated around the bend.

If we got bored, my younger brother and I would walk to a friend's house, which was located about a mile up the mountain. We would fill a mayonnaise jar with kool-aid, stash it in a brook at the half-way point, and on the way home consume it thirstily. There was no television. There was no electricity. We played cards by the kerosene lamps at night and told stories in front of the Franklin stove.

It was at Indian Pond that I learned about trilliums in the spring. I was told to leave the Lady Slipper where she grew, because of its scarcity. I was taught to pick cranberries in the frosty bog behind the camp. My first "Northern Lights" were seen from the front porch of that little camp. Without realizing it, I gathered a host of knowledge by just being there.

Sometimes after a hot, hazy August day when evening starts coming down, I still remember four kids sitting on a dam, scanning the pond for a rowboat bringing their parents home after a day's work at the mill. Summers went too soon and age came on too quickly. The camp is still there; I wonder if the kids are also. If so, I hope they still get down on their knees and watch the flatfish. □

Sandra Morgan
South Glens Falls, New York



Thinking Of Country Things

by John Meader

BUGS

Knowing one's enemy well is generally conceded to be advantageous, so I spent some time recently studying that feature of Maine's spring and summer which, sure as death and taxes, and no more welcome, makes living here imperfect—bugs.



First, one needs to know the offender's name. It adds to the injury not to. One has a welt as large as a quarter with a carmen spot in the middle. It affords small satisfaction to wave a fist and mutter, "Insect."

Our insect offenders are quite well known by local, common name. We have black flies, mosquitoes, deer fly and no-see-ums. I've gone to the trouble to learn the Latin scientific names of these creatures as well. The Latin has a convincing sound, as with **Culex pipiens**. This translates to "piping midge," and refers to our all too prevalent, all too piping, house mosquito.

The deer fly's Latin name is **Chrysops vittatus**, which means, as I interpret it, golden eyed (insect) with a headband. I'm not sure this is totally accurate, for the deer fly's eyes are more spotted than golden, and the stripes across the wings are more prominent than any headband, I think. I have not, however, spent more than a minute or two looking a deer fly in the eye.

My digging into the Latin leaves me a bit puzzled though when the black fly is encountered. **Simulium venustum** is the given name. Try as I can to come up with something more reasonable, the words appear to mean "imitating beauty" or "having a graceful shape." Never has beauty been more in the eye of the beholder. And

once one of those little beauties gets in your eye, try to get it out.

Aside from the oddities of scientific names, I have no desire whatsoever to depreciate what science has done for us in the matter of bugs. Biting, blood-sucking insects are notorious carriers of disease. At one time, malaria was a serious problem in some sections of the United States. Today we may tend to think of it as an exotic malady contracted only in under-developed tropical and sub-tropical countries. But four cases of malaria of U.S. origin were reported as recently as 1949. We owe our freedom from the mosquito-spread problem to scientific study of mosquitoes, and to vast public health efforts based on that study.

What is known about our foursome, black flies, no-see-ums, mosquitoes and deer fly? Far too much for me to even summarize here.



The mosquito might have been highly praised as a singing bird if he had stuck to that business alone.

You don't say

THE HORNET SUMMER

One summer a few years before the start of World War II became known locally as the hornet summer. The hornets proliferated far beyond the usual norm for hornets in the summer time. They were everywhere.

Horses were attacked in the hay fields. One team ran away and wrecked a hay wagon. The bell rope in the Methodist church broke and could not be repaired on account of the hornets' nests in the belfry. They bothered cattle in the pastures. They built a nest in Grandpa's outhouse and stung the hired girl. They stung a child playing in his own yard so badly that he had to be taken to the doctor.

On a chilly October evening, all these events came under discussion around the box stove in the General Store.

Abe Huntress opened the evening's cracker barrel forum with the following statement: "I never saw the hornets so doggedly thick as they were this summer. I wonder if that don't predict an open winter."

Joe Durgin shook his head. "Not according to my Farmer's Almanac. It says, 'when the hornets are thick, the snow will come quick.'"

Ike Lowell raised his voice: "My grandsire used to say that an extra lot of hornets meant an open winter."

The discussion warmed up until it had worked itself into an impasse.

Those taking part noticed that Uncle Henry had not joined in the discussion. He sat quietly reaming out his pipe and carefully stuffing it with a cut plug. An octagenarian, he was considered by all to be well-versed in both Indian and local folk lore.

Lon Lowell asked, "What do you say, Uncle Henry? What do you think all this mess of hornets means?"

Uncle Henry put fire to his pipe and seemed to be considering. "Well, I reckon you are all wrong." He expelled a cloud of smoke.

Everyone waited silently, eagerly for the oracle to decide the debate.

After a little time, Henry finally spoke, firmly, decisively: "As I see it, it just means it has been one hell of a good year for hornets!"

For example, there seem to be over 2,000 species of mosquitoes alone; and experts are still counting, for I read recently an account of a newly discovered species. The insect differed from its relatives by having fewer, or more, or no sensory hairs on its antennae, or something of the sort. The first impulse is to say so what? But it isn't in the least bit absurd. The bug with the hairless antennae may be the one that carries disease.

Some characteristics are shared by our local insect pests, but before I describe them I should talk a little about the separate animals.

Black flies appear about the earliest. They frequently seem at their worst about plowing time. Their advent apparently is tied mostly to water and air temperature. Water temperature is probably foremost in effect, since the flies hatch from eggs that are deposited upon stones and vegetation immersed in free-running water.

The term "free-running" must be emphasized, for the developing fly in its larval or worm-like phase is very dependent upon the presence of available oxygen in the water. Eggs and larval flies are predominantly found near rushing water where the turbulences captures air. I think this explains why some wet land is not as buggy as one would expect. We have two brooks directly behind the house, but our black fly problem is what I'd call only moderate (one can breathe without checking first), apparently because the brooks run fairly slowly through sandy bottom free of stones.



While Maine's black fly problem at its height seems just about unbearable, we could have worse. In some regions some black fly types persist through summer, while our type spoils a mere two or three weeks. In parts of Africa black flies are so virulent that much outdoor activity stops. In Sudan, natives may carry or wear masses of smoldering rope to keep the insects at a distance. The fashion around here runs to bee-veils and mesh clothing over which the wearer sprays repellent. I'm not sure there's

much to distinguish between the two practices.

Black Fly Season (it does seem to require capital letters) at some point or another tends to blend into mosquito and no-see-um time. Mosquitoes and no-see-ums pollute the morning and evening air while black flies dominate the bulk of the working day. With a spell of warm weather, one may also witness the rasp of the deer fly.

As with black flies, our mosquitoes and midges (no-see-ums) require water for maintaining their tribe; but neither is as fussy about water quality. Midges develop on the margins of ponds or even in somewhat salty water; they can be adominable at the seashore near tidal marshes. As for mosquitoes any old water seems to do. Rain barrels, tree crotches, discarded rubber tires...if it holds water it, in season, also holds the little wrigglers from which the flying adult emerges.

So widespread are the developing mosquitoes you never know where they'll be met. I know a man who got thirsty working in the woods and dipped some water out of an old well. He said it looked just like lemonade except the little pieces of lemon pulp moved under their own power.

are the worst in pine flats and not nearly so bad in upland hardwood stands. But I haven't, and probably won't, put much time to verifying my impressions. To verify is to get bitten.

But, and it is a notable but, I've thus far been telling a kind of half-story. Not all midges, mosquitoes, black flies and deer fly bite. True, they all start off as eggs laid in or near water. They all develop into larval-types and then into two-winged insects. But only the females seek blood. Only females bite.

At first glance, it's curious. The males—no-see-ums and the rest lead a rather markedly different life from that of the females; so different, indeed, that students and collectors of insects sometimes have to go to lengths to locate them. Males live on pollen and nectar exclusively; they frequent flowers. It isn't as though they were adverse to blood-sucking. They lack the necessary equipment. Only females have the full complement of cutting and sucking tools that make blood-feeding possible.

Why so? There seems to be a direct tie between a blood-supplemented diet (females will also sometimes consume sugars) and egg laying, and it is this: the yolk of insect eggs is mostly protein; many insects can't develop

The mosquito bite on one's forehead marks one as an unwilling donor of protein to the furtherance of another generation of things that go whine in the night.

No-see-ums seem to be off and on again as far as their presence is concerned, but mosquitoes stay around until frost, or thereabouts. And that isn't necessarily the end of them either, for some types will hibernate inside houses, and occasionally come bouncing across the ceiling in the dead of winter seeming strangely out of place.

Deer fly usually show up in June. If black flies and plowing go together, then deer fly are the pest of strawberry picking. They also always go for the forehead, ears, and neck of humans, perhaps attracted there by perspiration. But any bare skin will do, and if they find it and can work their business then the bump that results is large. Deer fly seem most prevalent in broken or open woods—"deer ground," and they do feed extensively on the deer herd and on cattle and horses as well as people. My impression is that deer fly

enough of their own protein to support egg-laying; and blood is an excellent protein source. Therefore the mosquito bite on one's forehead marks one as an unwilling donor of protein to the furtherance of another generation of things that go whine in the night.

By morning we're ready to forget the transaction; having, or course, three hours earlier waked the whole family, dog included, on the grounds that no one sleeps if there's a mosquito in the house. But to the female mosquito, the several drops of blood that she has imbibed are truly momentous. The female retires to digest the blood and convert it to eggs; a transformation that may take two weeks. Then the successful mother deposits the eggs, a couple hundred say, on some little dot of water and wings off for another nice breakfast of nectar and thee.

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But looked at from the human perspective, it's a minor outrage to be unwillingly enlisted in a process we outright revile. We surely should be thankful not to have to worry about malaria (or any other number of insect-carried diseases that beset other regions of the world.) Yet large reasons for thanks have never put to rest our minor gripes and the demand still arises, "Can't anybody do something about cussed *Culex pipiens*, or whatever she's called?"

For years many anybodies have been doing, or trying to do, something. Biting insects have mothered many desperate inventions. We are all familiar with the home-brewed varieties of fly-dope that natives resort to, containing kerosene as a base and bear-grease as the active ingredient, guaranteed to nauseate no-seesums and also to peel off the wearer's skin as effectively as paint remover.

As with the control of woodchucks, every year seems to have its cure for bugs. One spring I remember the word went round that Johnson's Baby Oil was the ticket. It was peculiar to see grown men toting plastic bottles of baby oil in their hip pockets where an earlier generation might have sported a flask.

In our mechanized age we forget, but work animals as well as work people have bug problems, and sensible, humane teamsters, for instance, try to protect their horses and oxen. One recourse was to rub axle grease in the hair around the animals' eyes.

The association of animals and humans can also work to human advantage in the battle with bugs. One scientist has suggested that farmers and cattle herders who sleep with their cattle are less likely to contract malaria. The cattle get bitten instead.

But these days answers are sought and found on a more organized basis. One such answer is dimethylphthalate or DMP. (It's the nature of our times that when we do find an answer it has to be abbreviated.) DMP is an effective insect repellent, and composes the muscle of most commercially-prepared repellants.

Anyone who's used a DMP repellent knows that it does repel, and that is it. One still possesses the awful cloud around the head, and insects still attack. But though they strike they don't stay to suck. It's to travel in the midst of a localized, buzzing hail storm.

Repellents are the major option. Those who study insect pests also have some suggestions touching upon ways not to attract the critters in the first place. One such way involves the color of one's clothing. Blue, I think, is to be avoided; while light greens and browns are preferable. Secondly, experts advise that one forsake wearing scents; meaning perfumes, I guess, which would include deodorants, shampoos and aftershaves.

May we hope for answers on a larger scale? The question involves many secondary issues of economics and environmental side-effects. To mention but one minor instance of the latter: black fly larvae are one of the principal food sources of brook trout. Destroy the insect and you may also eliminate the fish.

But looked at from the angle of simple technology and management, the answer in time may be yes. For instance, it may be possible to breed and release a strain of sterile black fly males whose presence, it is suggested, will so generally confuse the females that effective reproduction will drop radically.

Another approach has been tested with a type of insect that damages certain crops in California. Scientists have discovered and duplicated the particular chemical "scent" which attracts the male to the female of this species. The chemical is injected into biodegradable micro-fibrils (something like very tiny soda-straws) and then these fibrils are dusted by airplane upon the infested plants. The males are so busy trying to make time with the sweet-smelling counterfeits that the bona fide ladies might as well have stayed at home.

It sounds somewhat fantastic—micro-fibrils and sterile male flies. But the idea comforts. One would almost forgive a mosquito the blood if it weren't for the disrupted sleep. The bite of the black fly is nothing to the irritation caused by all the others so busily bumping one's ears and seeking to creep under the collar or kerchief. The real affront is the distraction. May *Simulium venustum* pay the same price, to be driven half mad by a fixed male or a soda straw reeking of come-hither-quickly. □



John Meader is a farmer & writer in Buckfield.

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Eliza and the Lost Ox

FICTION
by
Harry Walker

It was a warm, rainy day and I had sneaked up into the attic of our old farmhouse in western Maine to sit on a lumpy sofa and look at picture books. I was afraid that my dad would decide it was a good day to pick over beans, a task I hated, and I wanted to be out of sight and out of hearing.

I was only a few pages into "Billy the Boy Artist" when I heard slow, familiar footsteps coming up the attic stairs and soon the gray-haired head of my grandmother, Rosina, appeared.

"Hello, Sonny," she said softly. "I thought I heard you go by my door. Mind if I join you?"

I said of course I didn't and she shuffled to the carpet-backed platform rocker opposite me and settled into it.

"I love to hear the rain pepper the roof," she said. "Don't you?"

I said I did. "Makes it seem cozy here, and safe." Safe from having to pick over beans, I could have added.

Gram rocked slowly for a spell, her blue eyes reflective. "A day like this brings back memories. All kinds of memories. And this Cold River Valley we live in has had plenty of happenings for us to recall. Would you like to have me tell you a story?"

"Of course I would," I said. Billy the artist could wait. "What's it about?"

"I think I'll call it 'Eliza and the Lost Ox'."

"Who's Eliza?" I asked.

"She was my aunt. She was slim and straight and quite pretty, and weighed about half as much as her husband, Micah McKeen. My family lived a mile up the road from here, remember, and the McKeen farm was the next one above ours. The McKeens had no children, yet I used to spend a lot of time at their place as a child. Eliza seemed to enjoy my company and Micah endured me in his gruff manner."

"Was Micah a good man?" I asked, sensing disapproval of him in Gram's tone.

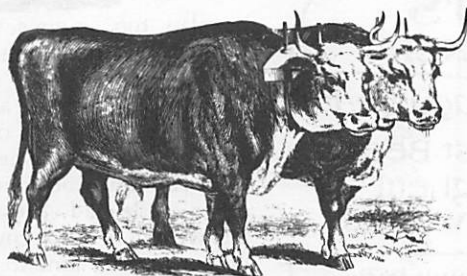
She shrugged. "Well, good enough. Typical of his time. He was a very proud man, 'specially proud of his oxen. He strove to have the best pair in town and he usually did have. And Micah was as rugged as his oxen, thick in the chest with mighty arms. Afraid of nothing. Or so most folks believed."

"What about the lost ox?" I wanted to know.

Rosina seemed not to hear me. "There was something quite unusual about Micah, and well I remember it. Everywhere he went on foot he would have a goad stick in his hand. Unless, of course, he was doing work that required something else to be in his hand, like an ax or a pitchfork. Walking from house to barn, or going down the road to the store, or anywhere, he always had his goad stick with him. You know what one is, don't you?"

"Sure, it's a strong oak stick about four feet long with a sharp brad in one end," I answered proudly. "They use it to drive oxen."

Gram nodded. I wasn't sure you knew, as horses are so much in use now instead of oxen in this year of nineteen-



eighteen. People didn't think it strange that Micah took a stick along even when he wasn't driving a pair of his steers. He loved those animals and it was only natural that he would like the feel of anything associated with them. I can picture him now walking by our house, using the stick to rap a nosey dog on the head, maybe, or to beat a snake to death almost in a frenzy.

"What about the lost ox?" I asked once again.

Rosina drew a deep breath, then said, "His name was Star. He was a big Red Durham and a gentle animal. I used to pat his nose and scratch the top of his head."

"Where did he get lost?"

"Right in back of the McKeen buildings, strangely enough. It was August and Micah had finished haying, and the oxen could have a rest. He turned Star and his mate, Line, into the twenty-acre pasture that extended up to the next farm. A young pair of steers and four cows shared the area which was a mixture of bushes and trees and clear grassy spaces. It was a dry summer and the cattle had come to the watering trough in back of the barn to drink. The third day that Star and Line were out there, Star didn't come down with the others to the hollowed-out log to drink at noon."

"I suppose that worried Micah a bit," I said.

Gram chuckled. "It sure did. I don't think he would have been so concerned if Eliza had been missing. She and I came by from a trip to the henhouse and Micah was beside the trough, scratching his head and staring up into the pasture. Eliza told him not to worry as Star was probably just hanging back, or hunting for apples, as there were Russet trees here and there.

Micah declared that if the other cattle were thirsty, Star was too, and he should be there with them drinking. Eliza asked if he thought Star could have gotten out of the pasture.

"It's possible," Micah admitted. "Think I'll check the walls."

"No barbed-wire fences, then?" I asked Gram. She shook her head.

"Just stone walls or rail fences or stump fences. But they were adequate. Micah strode off, goad stick in hand, and I tagged along. I was nine then, and afraid of nothing by barn spiders. I had to trot to keep up with Micah but I didn't mind as long as I didn't step on a thistle plant with my bare feet."

"And did Micah find a hole in the wall?"

"Nope. Every rock was in place around the pasture. Micah kept shaking his head and calling Star's name, and it was plain enough that Star hadn't broken out. But where was he?"

"Maybe just resting under some shady apple tree," I offered.

Gram got up and opened a dome-top trunk behind her chair and took out a woolly black shawl. "Aunt Eliza's," she said, wrapping it around her shoulders. "It's fitting that I wear it for my story is really her story."

She returned to her rocker and I waited impatiently for her to go on. The rain still drummed on the roof just above our heads and we listened to it for a time. "Be good for the gardens and wells," she said.

"Please go on with your story," I urged.

"Well, when Micah and I got back to the barn, Eliza was there wearing her 'outside' boots. She agreed with us that Star must still be in the pasture and suggested that the three of us spread out and comb the area. Micah said that was

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his plan, too, so we set out hopefully.

"And you found Star, with a busted leg, maybe?"

"Nope. We walked and walked, back and forth, from one end of the pasture to the other, through bushes, scrub pines, and alder runs and not a glimpse of big Star. The other cattle had spread out again to graze and we had to keep reminding ourselves that none of them, Line in particular, was Star. We became hot and tired and Micah got stung by a hornet, but we didn't give up until five o'clock."

"What a way to spend an afternoon," I said.

"In a way it was fun for me, but not for Micah," Gram went on. "He looked almost sick. A neighbor named Irish came along the road and Micah told him that Star was strangely missing. I went home soon after and told my parents and my four brothers the news and Mr. Irish must have spread the word, too, for by evening half the town knew about Star."

I squirmed on my sofa. "I hope somebody found Star the next day. He'll be awfully thirsty."

"Be patient," Gram advised me. "According to Eliza, Micah didn't sleep one wink that night. He paced the rooms and kept going out to the open end of the barn to see if Star was bedded down by the water trough with the other cattle. Star didn't come and by morning Micah was frantic. He quickly herded the three steers and the cows into the tie-up and secured them. Then he hunted through the pasture again with no luck."

"I bet he felt really sick by now," I said.

"Worried sick," Gram nodded. "Before he ate a bite of breakfast Micah trotted down to the corner store and announced that he would pay five dollars to anyone who could find his missing ox. And that brought lots of help. Five dollars back then was a month's pay for a hired farm hand, as good as ten dollars today. Men and boys, on foot and in wagons were going by our place before ten o'clock."

"Where did they all come from?" I asked.

"From all around. Many from right here in Stow, of course. And from North Chatham and North Fryeburg, and Chatham Center, and Butter Hill. The Abbotts, the Charleses, the Wileys, the Wiggins, and the Eastmans. Also the Days, the Andrewses, the Farringtons, and the Emersons, to name

only some. Even two Johnson men came over the Day road from Union Hill to join the hunt. Whatever plans they all had for that warm August day they dropped to try for the five-dollar reward."

"What did you do that day, Gram?"

"Well, I had to pick and shell some late peas in the forenoon, but by one o'clock I was up to the McKeen place. Soon Micah came into the house for a drink of water, sweaty and scowling, and Eliza asked if he would pay the reward to *anyone* who found Star. Micah said 'Of course I will. Any person who finds my ox gets the money.'"

"Did you and Eliza go out and hunt?"

"No. We spent much of our time on the back porch of the house from where we looked right into the pasture. And it was a sight. Bushes wiggling everywhere as men and boys beat their way about, calling to each other and wiping sweat from their faces and swinging their hats at the biting flies that pestered them constantly. Three o'clock came, then four, and still no sign of Star. Two men walked by not far from us and we heard one of them say, 'It beats me where in hell that big steer is. It's as if the earth has swallowed him up.'"

"How silly," I said.

"Not so. I heard Eliza suck in her breath and then exclaim, 'That's it! The earth *has* swallowed Star!'"

I was really puzzled. How could the ground swallow big Star? Gram went on quickly, "For the life of me I couldn't imagine what was on Eliza's mind. As soon as the two men moved on she was down from the porch and climbing over the stone wall to the pasture, long skirts held high. 'Follow me, Zina!' she called back, 'We're going to find ol' Star!'"

Rosina paused and smiled as she recalled Eliza's actions. I squirmed impatiently on my sofa. The rain was beating on the attic window now in gusts, like thousands of invading insects attacking the blown-glass panes. Soon I asked:

"Where on earth was Eliza going? Where could she look that hadn't been looked at already?"

"She could look into the old well that everyone, including herself, had forgotten about."

I gulped. "You mean to say Star was in a well?"

"That's right. An old dry well not a hundred paces from the house. A few gray

birches grew around it in an otherwise clear area. It was so under our noses that we had overlooked it. I saw Eliza heading for the little clump of birches and I clambered over the wall and was right behind her as she pushed her way into them. I went in, too, and together we stared down into a messy, rock-lined hole—and right at helpless Star!"

"Oh, boy, found at last!" I responded. "Was he alive?"

"He was. He heard us and rolled his eyes up in a pitiful plea for help. Eliza told me to go quickly and tell the men, so I backed out of the bushes and ran up the pasture yelling 'Eliza's found him! Star's in the well!' Micah and others heard me and did they come running! Within ten minutes as many as twenty-five men and boys were milling about the old well, looking down into it and shouting excitedly. Micah yelled orders to fetch shovels and pickaxes from the barn, then dashed to the woodshed for an ax to cut the birches, nearly tripping over his goadstick as he ran."

"How could they get Star out?" I asked. "They couldn't rope his horns and pull him up like a fish, could they, he's so big?"

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"Of course not. What they had to do was take the well down."

"But—the well is already down, way down in the ground," I reminded Gram. She explained patiently:

"Taking a well down means digging the soil away from around it and removing the rocks forming the lining, one by one, way down to the bottom. Luckily the top rocks of this well had fallen in years ago and some dirt with them, so the hole wasn't so deep as when dug. Star's head was only four feet down but his tail end was many feet lower. Fortunately he had fallen in hind-end first or he wouldn't have been alive."

"How long did it take to get him out?"

"About two hours. And it was a time your Grammie will never forget. Shovels and pickaxes clanked against rocks and hard subsoil and dirt flew back from the well in a shower. The men took turns digging, ignoring the sweat that dripped down their faces. Boys got in the way trying to help and pushed each other about. Micah got down in the well and stood on Star's shoulders. He pushed outward on each rock of the lining as it was loosened and kept them from falling inward and hitting Star. I was over on the

porch with Eliza who had rolled out a big crock and filled it with switchel for the thirsty men. There was also a big pan of her ginger cookies and doughnuts. A neighbor named Bryant came with a horse hitched to a big iron scoop and that helped a lot as the scoop could move mounds of dirt out of the way fast."

"Gee, what fun! I wish I had been there!" I said, and I meant it.

"Too bad you couldn't have. It was the biggest event this town had known for years. More excitement than any Fourth of July picnic by the river with speeches and games and ice cream. We were afraid that Star might be badly injured, perhaps have a broken leg. But when they finally dragged him out on the lowered ground with the help of a horse and a length of hay rope around Star's mighty horns, he appeared to be all right. He tried to stand up but he couldn't, and he wouldn't until morning. Thirty hours in such a cramped position had numbed his hind legs."

"I bet Micah was some happy."

"Ha! He was ecstatic. He fussed over Star like a mother hen over a hurt chick, talking to him and rubbing his legs. He yelled for

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water and someone brought a big bucket full and Star gulped it down in no time. Most of the men and boys were now by the porch eating and drinking Eliza's offerings. I heard a man ask who had found the steer, anyway, and I spoke up good and loud, 'Eliza found him!'

"I bet that didn't make them too happy," I said.

"It didn't. For a few moments it was very quiet. Men looked at Eliza and then at each other, and some slowly shook their heads as they realized that none of them would be taking home the five-dollar reward. Micah loudly expressed his gratitude to all for their neighborly help and the crowd soon thinned out. My father and brothers had helped dig out the well and father told me to come home with them, but I begged to stay a little longer and he let me. I wanted to see Eliza get the money."

"And did she?" I asked. "Did Micah pay her right away?"

Rosina's lips tightened and a frown pinched her brow. I had a strange feeling in my stomach about what would happen next. Gram answered:

"When Micah and Eliza were alone but for me, she cleared her throat and said, 'I'm so glad I remembered the old well, Micah. Another day in there an Star could have died. I hope you'll pay me the five dollars by tomorrow as I need several things from the store for myself.'

"Micah stood up beside Star and stared over at Eliza with a surprised look on his face. He said, 'I'm grateful you found him, Liza, but surely you don't expect me to pay you?'"

"Oh-oh!" I said from my sofa. "Trouble ahead!"

Gram nodded her gray head solemnly and went on:

"I saw Eliza stiffen a bit, then she said, 'And why not pay me? I found Star. I won the reward.' Micah shook his big head and told her, 'But you're my wife! You found him for me, your husband—for nothing!'"

"That darn Indian giver!" I said, almost hating Micah.

"Being a sensitive girl I didn't like to hear grownups argue, but I stayed put by the porch, hardly believing my ears. Micah wasn't going to pay Eliza! For a space they glared at each other, then she reminded him:

'But you told me, very definitely, that you would pay five dollars to any person who

found Star.' Micah had to admit that he had said that but he hated to, sputtering and getting redder in the face. Then Eliza told him, very firmly:

"Well, I, too, am a person, Micah McKeen. I am somebody, even if I'm a woman!"

"Good for her!" I cheered. Rosina went on quickly:

"Micah let out an oath and kicked a shovel lying nearby. 'I know, but, damn it, Eliza, you're my wife!' he shouted. 'We're family! It just ain't fittin' that I pay you!'"

"Oh, boy, what a cheapskate!" I said, really hating him now.

Rosina nodded in agreement. "Eliza had made a good stand for her rights but it did no good. Micah was set. He told her to say no more about the reward. They had saved Star and that was what counted. But Eliza wasn't giving up. She had one more card to play and it was most unexpected. She said:

"Micah, if you don't pay me that five dollars I'll tell the whole town about your cowardly secret!"

"Well, you should have seen Micah," Gram went on. "He jerked like he'd been jabbed by a pitchfork. His face got real ugly and he shook a fist at Eliza and roared:

"If you do that, woman, I'll make you wish you'd never been born! With that he stomped off to the barn, fuming."

"Jeepers!" I exclaimed. "It must be an awful secret for him to get that mad! What was it?"

"I'll tell you soon, be patient," Gram held me off. "I felt very sorry for Aunt Eliza and I told her so. She put her arm around me and said in a calm but determined voice:

"He'll pay, Zina, one way or another, at some time or another. Just wait and see."

"She really wanted that money, didn't she?" I said.

Gram nodded and fingered the shawl about her shoulders.

"In those days most wives didn't get to handle much money. Custom had made that the husband's privilege, just as though women were not capable of making decisions. It was insulting, 'specially when we consider how some husbands frittered away their money on rum and poker and on foolish horse trades."

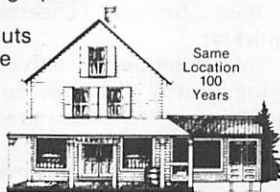
"What did folks around here think of Micah's not paying Eliza the reward?" I asked.

Rosina laughed and rocked so hard the platform rocker jumped an inch off the floor.

"What didn't they think! The wives, of

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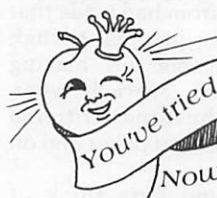
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course, said it was a shame, and that Micah was a cheat and a scoundrel. The men were inclined to side with him, and some would have acted the same had they been in his place, I'm sure. I was the first to spread the news that Micah wasn't going to pay Eliza for finding Star, telling my family at our supper table. I also mentioned that Eliza had threatened to reveal a cowardly secret of Micah's if he didn't give her the reward.

"'Cowardly secret!' my father exclaimed. 'Micah's the bravest man in town! Eliza must be funning!' Well, I told him she wasn't and that Micah got real mad. Father shook his head and refused to believe me, and my brothers sided with him. They recalled the time when Micah, up on Mt. Sloop, had picked up an oak limb after his gun misfired and hit a lunging trapped bear so hard on the nose that it dropped the beast, allowing Micah to finish it off with his knife."

"Gee, that was brave," I had to admit. "What could a man like that be afraid of?"

"We'll see. But first I must tell you that Micah dropped dead two years later."

"Oh, no," I said, a bit shocked. "He didn't pay Eliza and now she couldn't get even with him for cheating her!"

"Who says she couldn't?"

"But how could she? Micah's dead," I argued.

Rosina chuckled and drew the shawl tighter about her neck.

"Sonny, men are pretty good at getting even with men who do them wrong, but when it comes to *really* getting even with a cheating man you can't beat a woman."

"But what could she do?" I wondered aloud.

"She could reveal Micah's cowardly secret. And she did, in her own sweet time, in her own unique way."

"And just what was Micah's big secret?" I asked.

"This may not sound like much but it meant a lot to Micah to keep it quiet because of his pride and his reputation for being brave. You see, he was afraid of snakes."

"No fooling? Big Micah?" I could hardly believe it.

"Terrified of snakes, he was. Any kind, any size. He had a phobia about them. Just couldn't help it, I suppose."

"A big, strong man like him? Not afraid to face an angry bear but scared stiff of a snake?" I really was amazed. I didn't fear snakes and I had often picked up small ones

and played with them.

"It's true," said Gram. "Micah would have just about died of shame had his secret been told while he lived."

"And no wonder. People would have laughed at him right to his face," I reasoned, and Gram nodded.

"That he couldn't have stood. And now we knew why he always had a goadstick with him. It wasn't because he loved oxen so much, it was because he feared snakes more. The stick was his defense against the reptiles."

"Who said that was why?" I asked, not really believing.

"Eliza did. Bit by morsel, as time went on, she made everything clear. She said the main reason Micah dropped dead was because he didn't have a goadstick with him right then. He had been trying to break a pair of young steers to yoke and they were stubborn, turning their yoke again and again. Micah beat them so hard that he snapped his goadstick. He threw it aside in anger and started for the barn for another stick—and met a snake in the path. According to Eliza, who was on the front porch, Micah stopped in his tracks, stared down at the snake with bulging eyes for a moment and then let out a yell of sheer terror and fell down dead. And she saw the snake. It wasn't a foot long. Just a baby."

"Who would have believed it?" I said. "What a way for a 'brave' man to die!"

"It was a hot July day and Micah had worked himself into a big sweat training the steers. His heart surely was overtaxed even before he saw the snake. Without a goadstick, or any 'weapon' in his hand, the shock was just too much."

"Poor Micah." Now I really felt sorry for him. "And did Eliza tell his secret to everyone right away?"

Gram shook her head quickly. "Far from it. She was a very honorable person, remember. Sometime in the past she had promised Micah that she wouldn't ever 'open her mouth' about his secret to anyone."

"How did people find out, then?" I was puzzled.

"Eliza kept her word to Micah as the months went by. She didn't 'open her mouth' to a soul about his fear of snakes. She merely went to the stonecutter in Fryeburg Village ten months after Micah's death and wrote on a slip of paper what she wanted put on his gravestone."

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"Oh-oh," I said, beginning to see a loophole. "What did she have put on the stone?"

Rosina rubbed her gnarled hands together and smiled tantalizingly as though savoring what she was about to say.

"Go on, go on," I urged impatiently.

"Well, she wrote down Micah's full name, of course, and his birth date and date of death. And the usual 'Gone But Not Forgotten.' Then she added a little verse she had made up that was most revealing to all of us who went to see the new stone in the cemetery. It went like this:

Without his goadstick
He met a tiny snake,
Dropt quite dead of fright,
And thereby sealed his fate."

"Wow!" I said. "That let the cat out of the bag! Or should I say 'snake'?"

"It certainly did. That was the first inkling anyone had of what Micah's cowardly secret was about. From then on Eliza would answer questions concerning her late husband's phobia. So with a bit of verse she exploded the myth that Micah McKeen had been the bravest man in town, afraid of nothing. And still kept her promise to him."

"What did the folks around here then have to say?"

Gram laughed and clapped her hands together smartly.

"They said plenty! The women were pleased that Eliza had gotten even with her husband for not giving her the reward, even though Micah was beyond feeling any shame for having been afraid of snakes or feeling any remorse for having treated Eliza so shabbily. But the men—oh, my! They took it hard!"

"You mean they couldn't imagine Micah as being any kind of a coward?" I asked.

"Right! To a man they didn't want to believe that Micah had been afraid of anything. But they had to believe because they knew that Eliza wouldn't lie. They shook their heads sadly and their respect for the late mighty Micah took an awful beating. Afraid of snakes? Even tiny ones? Perish the thought!"

Rain no longer drummed on the attic roof. A dusty sunbeam came through the south window and brightened the wide pine floorboards. Rosina stood up, pulled the old black shawl from her shoulders and put it back in the trunk. She smoothed it out lovingly and I heard her say:

"Thanks, Aunt Eliza. You were quite a woman."

To which I responded, under my breath: "Amen!" □

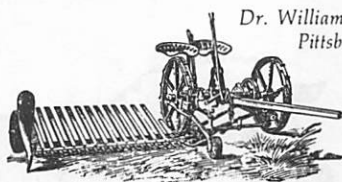
Harry Walker is a retired dairy farmer and a frequent contributor to **BitterSweet**. He resides on Pikes Hill in Norway.



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Dr. William S. Tacey
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The Hawk, The Pigeon, and The Woodchuck

by Alice B. Parks

The July morning is quiet on the farm. A spider runs across the floor and I step on him. I hate to kill anything, even the mosquitoes that fill the night air, but I'm allergic to insect bites. I try to make the deaths quick and efficient so there will be no unnecessary pain. I return to sit by the kitchen window and drink my coffee. Out of the corner of my eye I see a flurry of movement out by the apple tree and the big rock. My first thought is, "How strange—I've never seen a crow fly through the branches of the apple tree."

Then, much swifter than the time it takes to tell it, a huge grey hawk hangs almost suspended in the air about twelve feet above the ground. In surging to a near-stop, its tail is spread in a semi-circle of feathery grey and its wings are furled down towards the victim clutched in its claws—one of our young copper-color pigeons.

The pigeons look large when eating at the bird feeder outside the window, or when wheeling and soaring high in the sky in groups of eight or ten, but this pigeon looks tiny in the clasp of its captor.

From where I sit at the kitchen table it is only a few steps to the outside door, but by the time I run outside the predator and prey have disappeared. Outrage swells in me.

I later tell my son of the incident and he says, "That's the law of the wild and the hawk has to eat to survive."

The next morning while working at the

kitchen sink, I glance out the window. Eyes meet eyes. Mine and those of an adorable little woodchuck who sits up on his haunches nibbling on a mouthful of leaves and staring at me inquisitively. Without thinking, I pad quietly to the living room where husband and son sit watching the morning news on television. I put my finger to my lips and motion them to come to the kitchen window. Knowing full well what the fate of the little creature will be, I act automatically in alerting the men. The main picture in my mind is of the vegetable garden just reaching maturity. I remember the backbreaking hours all of us had to put in to bring it to this point.

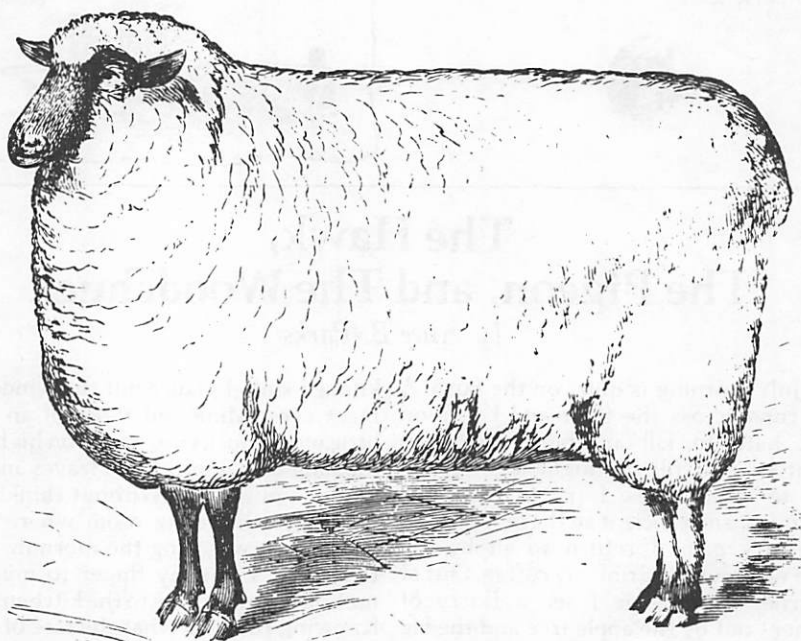
Son hefts his twenty-two rifle and a cartridge of shells and walks around the house. He knows exactly where to go. We had found the woodchuck's hole the week before not eight feet from the buildings. A well-placed shot, then several more to make sure the job is quick, since son has no more stomach for killing than I, and the deed is done.

Now I carry two pictures in my mind: the hawk swooping on his prey because it must eat, and the woodchuck lying silent on the grass because we must eat.

And though I do not like it any better, I have an increased empathy for the hawk. □

Alice Parks sells real estate in Buckfield with her husband Norman, and writes for **The Lewiston Daily Sun**.

Homemade



In Search of Sheep

Kate R. Gregg

Bumper Stickers can make stimulating reading. I saw a particularly thought-provoking one not long ago that has caused me much speculation. It read, "Eat lamb—wear wool."

Now I am particularly partial to both lamb for food and wool for clothing. But where, today, can you find either? In the past, the sheep held an honored position in the worlds of farming, commerce, literature and religion. The Bible is full of references to sheep. The loss of even one was cause for great concern. Flocks were a source of wealth. The shepherd, a symbol of loving care. Sheep bring to mind peace and tranquility, green pastures and still waters. They abound in literature from Mary's lamb to Virgil's Eclogues.

Sheep have lost their popularity of late. Synthetic fabrics may not be as warm as wool but they're cheaper and easier to handle. You can throw synthetics into the washing machine and—Joy!—they don't have to be ironed. But I wonder if we realize how much warmth we are losing when we abandon wool. Even wet, wool, with its natural oil, can keep the body warm, as sailors and fishermen know. Perhaps as the energy crisis deepens wool will again become popular not only for warmth but because of its non-reliance on petroleum.

Charles Lamb wrote an essay on roast pig. I'd rather have a eulogy on roast lamb. In the market, however, offerings of lamb are often confined to an occasional leg or skinny chops frequently imported from New

Zealand. Too bad. A leg of lamb is delicious with crisp, crackling skin and succulent juices redolent of garlic. But this is only one lamb dish. There are so many others. Not since childhood have I seen a crown roast, a rack formed in a circle, each bone tip decorated with a paper lace cap, the center filled with fresh garden peas. Truly a regal dish. Costly? Perhaps. But is it even available?

How about a roast shoulder or breast with herb dressing? Or lamb shish kabobs on a spit with onions and tomatoes and peppers? The lowly stew should not be spurned. Neck pieces make a delicious colorful dish served with spring vegetables. Or lamb with eggplant, lamb with chicory, lamb with navy beans, curried lamb. The possibilities are endless.

Recipes for crown roast or roast stuffed shoulder of lamb can be found in any standard cookbook like **The Joy of Cooking** or **The Boston Cooking School Cookbook**. Here are two more exotic ones. The first is from Greece, the second from India.

Lamb with Chicory

1½ lbs. shoulder or breast of lamb in one inch cubes.
1 large onion chopped
2 head chicory
1 cup yogurt
2 tbsp. butter or margarine
1 tbsp. flour
1 tbsp dill seed
salt and pepper

Grease a large casserole. Cover the bottom with one head of chicory washed and coarsely chopped. Brown the meat in the fat. Place it in the casserole on the chicory. Sprinkle lightly with flour, salt, and pepper. Sauté the onions in the fat remaining in the pan. Add one cup water. Bring to a boil and scrape up the browned meat juices in the pan. Pour over the meat in the casserole. Add the rest of the coarsely chopped chicory. Cover and bake in a slow oven, 300° until tender, about one hour. Stir in the yogurt and the dill seeds. Return to the oven for 15 minutes more.



Curried Lamb

The following dish may be made with regular commercial curry powder but more authentic recipes use different combinations of a variety of spices. Here is one possibility.

1½ lbs. lamb in one inch cubes
4-6 tbsp. oil
1 tsp. powdered ginger
1 tsp. coriander
1-1½ tsp. tumeric
1-1½ tsp. cumin
¼ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. dry mustard
½ tsp. ground cloves
½ tsp. nutmeg
2 medium onions chopped
1 apple diced
1½-2 cups stock

Brown the spices in the oil. Brown the lamb in this mixture. Add the onions and the apple and stir well. And 1½ cups stock. Cover and simmer until the lamb is tender, an hour or more. Add more stock if necessary.

Serve the curry with rice and any of the following condiments in separate dishes so the guests can take what they wish!

chutney	pickles
peanuts	raisins
chopped hard	chopped green pepper
boiled egg	
	shredded coconut



Gregg lives in Otisfield where she is on the lookout for sheep.

THE INS AND OUTS OF THE MATTER

I stay at home most every day;
I hardly ever go away,
But when I do, friends come to call.
They think I'm never home at all.

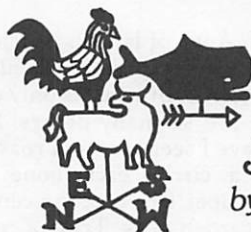
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**Jay's
Journal**
by Jay Burns

In most years, June is awaited with pleasant anticipation. Finally we can look forward to warm days and clear skies. Finally we can discard any ideas of frost or snow.

But it seems to me that the June of 1980 is being treated differently in these parts. After our wimpy little winter we have become spoiled. Instead of savoring the idea of summer, we are impatient for June's arrival. We don't hope and pray for clear sunny days this year; we expect them. If it rains, we expect there to be only a smattering of showers.

Our attitude regarding the coming of June and summer weather has not always been so unreasonable. Last year the weather leading up to June taught us to respect and hail the coming of summer.

The last week of May brought the worst weather imaginable. On May 24th a winter-type storm developed over Virginia. This was unusual because by the end of May the storm track has usually pushed far northward into central Canada. But weather does not always follow the meteorologist's manual. So on the 24th of May a light rain settled in over the hills and lakes region.

The rain swamped us for three days—from the 24th to the 26th. The wind was out of the cold and raw northeast at five-to-ten miles per hour. The temperature struggled to reach into the low fifties. 4.10 inches of rain swamped the region, three-quarters of an inch more than the average rainfall for the entire month. We were wet.

Doctors often talk about complications resulting from a particular disease. Weather is no different. Two major complications resulted from the rain.

The first involved our lawn. In the spring my family members are usually tied up with school baseball so we can't mow the lawn as much as we'd like. Grass grows quickly in the spring anyway so it doesn't take much to make our lawn look like deepest Africa. Well, 4.10 inches of rain was just enough to do the trick. After the storm that lawn wound up



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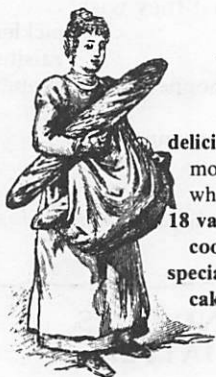
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about five feet high with twisted and matted spring grass. Remember, spring grass isn't like that wispy stuff that grows in the summer. It took two days of hacking before the thing was tamed.

Complication number two, was entirely outside out control. Complication number two was the dreaded damn black fly. True, the black fly comes along every year. But, the fly needs water in the form of small streams and brooks to hatch from larval forms. With water practically everywhere last year, the bugger had no problem making its grand entrance, full force.

Is the weather of June worth waiting for? Let's look at June of '79. On the ninth, tenth and eleventh the weather was uncharacteristically humid. Usually June does not have the painfully humid weather of July or August. But, last year newspapers were soggy and doors were swollen during the second week of the month. But then on the twelfth the weather shot to the other end of the spectrum. A cold front passed by during the night of the eleventh bringing with it very cool weather. On the twelfth the temperature only rose to sixty degrees and the wind howled out of the northwest at ten-to-twenty miles per hour.

I have presented two extremes of June that no one really welcomes.



And, even the long-awaited summer weather can be a disappointment. Thunder-showers that water gardens are welcome but the destructive ones are not. Warm weather is welcome but uncomfortable humidity is not. I know I sound very picky, but as I have said, we people of the hills and lakes region have been spoiled rotten by this winter. □


Burns, a sophomore at Oxford Hills High School, is a weather observer for WCSH-TV.

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Medicine For The Hills



by Michael A. Lacombe, M.D.

Epilepsy - Part I

Epilepsy, a common disease, is, because of the stigma attached to it, both a very well-kept secret and a disease shrouded in mystery. More than one million Americans have epilepsy in one of its forms, and many more suffer from seizures as a complication of other illnesses. The only disorder of the nervous system more common than epilepsy is stroke. Epilepsy is a disturbance of brain function resulting from a sudden abnormal discharge of electrical impulses from somewhere within the brain. This "short circuit" gives rise to a spontaneous abnormal

idea that those with epilepsy are in some way demented, or are doomed to be so. And that, of course, is simply not so. A second reason for studying this disease is that epilepsy in some instances may threaten life itself. It is obvious that those afflicted with generalized seizures, whereby loss of consciousness ensues, may in certain situations risk life and limb, such as when driving or swimming. We know also that those who have repeated seizures, one after the other every few minutes, so-called **status epilepticus**, are in danger of death. Lastly, epilepsy can appear as a symptom in a heretofore normal individual, signalling the development of a potentially curable brain tumor or brain abscess.

Epilepsy is classified in many and various ways, but a most useful classification divides the various seizure disorders into three categories: those seizures which are generalized, that is, seem to involve the brain all at once without any obvious focus of onset; those seizures which seem only to involve a certain part of the brain; and, thirdly, those where the seizures begin locally but then progress to involve the entire brain.

To understand epilepsy, high priority should be placed upon the dispelling of certain myths and prejudices which many of us hold about the disease.

sensation, alteration of consciousness, thought, muscle movement, or a combination of these. The terms **convulsion** or **seizure** are often substituted for the term epilepsy because of epilepsy's bad connotation.

To understand epilepsy, high priority should be placed upon the dispelling of certain myths and prejudices which many of us hold about the disease. For example, epilepsy *per se* does not affect intelligence, although certain types of childhood epilepsy may interfere with learning. As we shall see, this does not have to be the case. Certain individuals with other brain disorders affecting intelligence may have as a secondary phenomenon seizure problems which in and of themselves are not related to the impairment of intelligence. It is because of this confusion between epilepsy as a primary disease on the one hand and as a symptom of some other brain disorder on the other hand that people generally get the

In considering the first category, the generalized seizures, we find the two seizure types known best to layman: grand mal and petit mal epilepsy. Grand mal epilepsy is a seizure disorder to which the term **convulsion** is most applicable. Many patients afflicted with this form of epilepsy have a prodromal period whereby several hours of irritability, depression, or some other mood change may signal the coming of a seizure. About half the patients with grand mal seizures experience an **aura** just before the loss of consciousness, a sign of the impending seizure. This aura may be some unnatural bodily sensation or some abnormal bodily movement. In a grand mal seizure, the electrical discharge affects the entire brain all at once, with sudden loss of consciousness and a falling to the ground. In the initial, "tonic" phase of the seizure, the jaws clamp shut (and a severe laceration of the tongue may result), and the muscles of the body, including the muscles of

respiration, are held static in a tightly contracted state. It is in this tonic phase that the bladder may empty. After about ten to fifteen second the "clonic" phase of the generalized convulsion follows. There is a generalized trembling and then rhythmic musculature contractions of the entire body. Excessive sweating and excessive salivation occur during this phase. After one to two minutes the clonic phase ends with a deep sigh and resumption of breathing. The patient is now in a deep coma with relaxed muscles and quiet breathing. After several minutes the patient may regain consciousness although be still confused and disoriented. A deep sleep may follow, because of the mental and physical exhaustion resulting from the convulsion. Also, not unusually, such a convulsion may fatigue part of the brain and leave part of the body temporarily paralyzed during this post-seizure or **post-ictal** state, the so-called Todd's paralysis. About five per cent of patients with grand mal seizures are prone to having a series of seizures in a row without completely regaining consciousness between seizures. This **status epilepticus** is life-threatening and demand immediate medical treatment. A layman confronted with a person having a generalized seizure of this type should, after overcoming his own fear and prejudice, make certain that the patient causes himself no harm. Remembering that such a patient will do no voluntary harm to another, the person assisting should try to prevent laceration of the tongue by placing a soft object, such as a wallet, between the patient's teeth.

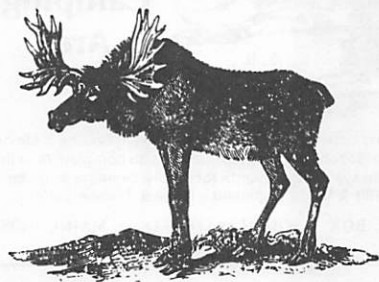
Grand mal seizures are certainly the most well-known of the seizure disorders, although by no means the most common. Next month we will consider a second generalized seizure disorder, petit mal epilepsy, as well as some other, focal, seizure problems. □

A MAIMED BIRD

The way we say
What we don't want to say
Is a maimed bird
Wavering,
Pained and graceless.

JoAnne Kerr
Weld

You don't say



THE MOOSE THAT GOT AWAY

Hunting in Maine can bring plenty of surprises. Once a sport shot a bull moose. With the help of four companions, the hunter loaded the animal onto a VW bug, then returned to the woods for more hunting.

Imagine their consternation when the men returned to their camp site to discover that both car and moose had disappeared. A day later another hunter reported having seen a big bull moose with a VW lashed to its back. Apparently the hunter's shot had only stunned the animal. □

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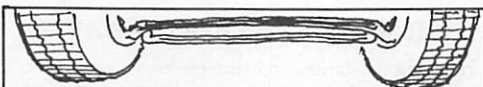
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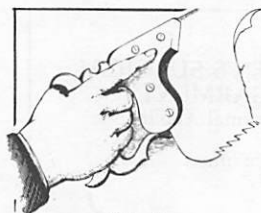


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You don't say

THE BROTHERS

Some years ago there lived in Hiram two aged brothers, Jim and Will. Dropouts from the lower grades, their vocabulary was in some respects quite restricted, but their proficiency with cuss words was practically unlimited.

One day they were commissioned to dig a grave in the Village Cemetery. When mourners gathered around the grave for the committal service, however, one side suddenly caved in.

Armed with pick and shovel, the brothers hastened to repair the damage while the crowd waited. From the depths of the grave Jim called to Will in a stage whisper: "Let me take your Goddam rule."

Will passed down his six-foot folding rule. In his haste Jim opened it improperly and it broke.

Will exclaimed in a loud voice, "By the Holy Ghost, if I'd have known you didn't have brains enough to open that thing right, I'd have done it myself!"

The dialogue that followed grew progressively louder and is better imagined than recorded.

The minister glanced uneasily at the assembled mourners and sternly admonished the brothers: "Gentlemen, such a profane outburst is most reprehensible and entirely inappropriate to the occasion. I beseech you to cease and desist immediately!"

Thus advised, the brothers completed their work and the committal service proceeded smoothly to a finish.

After the entire group had dispersed and the brothers were filling the grave, the undertaker heard Jim say to Will, "Willy, what did that Goddam parson say to us?"

After some consideration Will replied, "Well, I guess in his way of talking he was trying to say we was a couple of damned old fools!" □



Raymond Cotton
Hiram

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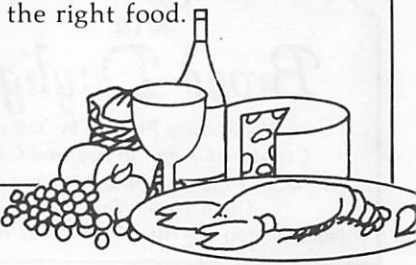


Downstairs at the Bethel Inn provides an informal atmosphere for lunch, dinner, and late evening dining until midnight. Perfect for before or after golf.

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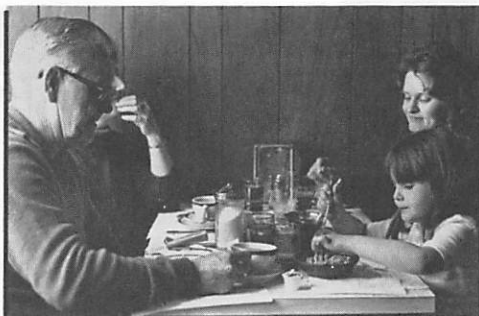
The Laughing Loon

A sudden wind plunders the land
disrobing the soil
riffing the lake
wrapping a chilly cloak around the oaks
and vanishing to the song
of the laughing loon.

A pounding rain chases the fish
capsizes leaf-heavy branches
and drives a scar into the earth
before it rides off beyond the hills
to the song
of the laughing loon.

And fog and sun take their turn on the land
as do predator and decay.
But, for my simple appearance on the lake
and mine alone
the loon flies away.

*Larry Allen Tyler
Augusta*



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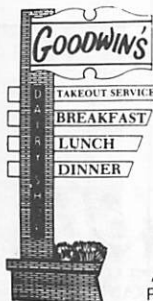
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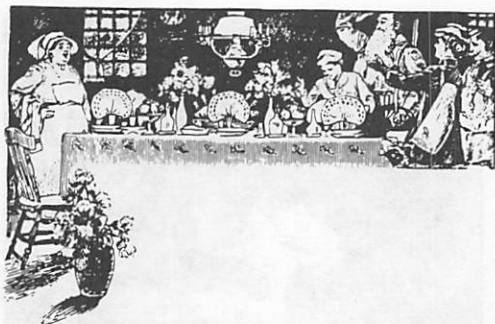
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Main St., Rte. 117, Harrison, 583-4576. Children's menu included. Family style restaurant featuring steak, roast beef, prime rib, scallops, lobsters and special omelets (all kinds). Open Tues.-Sunday 7 AM-11 PM. Ice Cream Shop 11-11.

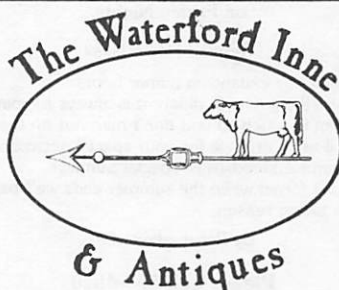
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MAINE GUIDE HUMOR

A woman sport was helping herself to a liberal portion of roasted beaver meat. "Wouldn't eat too much of that," her guide warned, "Knew a fellow once who did. His wife never could break him of gnawin' on the bed post in his sleep." □

*Dr. William S. Tacey
Pittsburgh, PA*



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The Home Front

*The book **Sunday River Sketches**, compiled from the notebooks of Martha Fifiel Wilkins, contains a description of the Alonzo Fifiel House at Riley Plantation, built in the middle of the last century. Mrs. Wilkins' fond recollections of her grandfather's center chimney Cape Code-style house make for interesting reading, offering insights into the way of life carried on in the houses of Maine's nineteenth-century farm.*

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O. Israel Fifiel had lived years on the west side of Bull Branch when his son Alonzo became of age and proposed to have a home of his own. He was about to marry Martha Abbot Russell of Newry, so father and son picked out a site on the east side of the stream on much higher ground, yet on a level with an upland field and near the road. Here, in 1842, they erected a frame house facing east, made in the usual way with a centered front door, a room on each side and convenient rooms on the back. On the ground floor, grouped around a central chimney, was a living room or kitchen, dining room, milk room, and bedroom. There was also a buttery on one side, and a stairway into the cellar, and another going from the kitchen to the chambers. On the second floor two chambers were finished and the rest of the room left as an unfinished attic. An ell was added to the house which served as a summer kitchen and was often called the shed although still further along was an open shed with an arched opening.

In this shed was a fine well and pump, a generous pile of cut wood and a varied assortment of small farm implements, harness materials, horse blankets, and odds and ends, before its days of usefulness were over.

Appended to the house and ell was a string of out-buildings; first the log house, then the horse barn and "old" barn for cows and hens and hay. Beyond was the barn yard with one side against the "new" barn where straw, threshing machine, vehicles and special farm machinery was kept. Still beyond these large barns was the little corn barn, which in later years was used as a tool house and shop. This was the rainy day rendezvous for the men and the place to cobble shoes, fix broken pieces of machinery and household equipment.

All of this was gradually built and accumulated up to the time it was destroyed by fire in 1924, covering a period of 82 years. But the house came first and here Alonzo Fifiel took his bride. They raised a

daughter, Julia Ann, and a son, Roscoe Alonzo . . .

I wish to tell you all about the house and its separate rooms which became very dear to me, and are memories which I now cherish . . . The front floor of the house, with its side lights, was seldom used. When there was a funeral it was opened wide, and sorrowing friends came in and out, but the entrance commonly used was either through the open shed or over the big door rock into the summer kitchen, thence into the living room.

This was the largest and most homey room in the house, having three windows through which the sun poured in abundance. Grammie Martha Fifield, in her later years, sat beside the south window in her splint-bottomed rocker, where she could look down the road and past the graveyard and see all the traffic which came in and out of Ketchum. Few movements escaped her keen eyes. She had a noon mark on the window sill, so she could tell the time without looking at the clock. The curtain of white cotton cloth, rolled up on a wooden roll from the bottom, made the only shade. This was seldom rolled down except when baths were

being taken in the kitchen. Under the twisted cord which held the center of the roller was the resting place for her glasses when she was not wearing them. She could reach up and put them there or get them without undue effort. In her later years she was a very heavy woman and had trouble with her feet, so did not move about much for several years. She was never idle, however, as can be attested by her very fine needlework and knitting. There was a ceaseless demand for socks, stockings, and winter gloves and mittens.

In this kitchen-living room was a long lounge covered with a wool coverlet woven in the house. Grammie was very proficient in weaving and mending as well as the culinary arts. I have seen the entire floor covered with rag carpeting woven in pattern, but as this wore out it was never replaced. Instead large braided rugs took its place on the unpainted floor. The low ceiling was plastered and had iron hooks fastened in the beams to carry long wooden bars on which socks were laid over to dry in the fall or branches of herbs were suspended to sure for winter remedies. The fireplace and brick oven were used when first built but eventually a "Banner" stove was installed and the fireplace used as a wood-box, while a fleet of flat-irons reposed in the old oven when it was not otherwise in use. As long as anyone lived there, hams were smoked in the brick oven.

Conveniences in the way of swinging shelves accommodated books, boxes of buttons and thread, stationery and such things. The big square clock bought in 1842 ticked out the years between the windows until 1909, and was wound regularly at 8 o'clock in the evening, summer and winter. It still goes well in 1945. Through one of the

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windows beside the clock shelf, someone outside tried to shoot a humming bird on the tiger lilies, missed, and the bullet came through the open window and made a hole through the drop-leaf table on the opposite side of the room. A board partition on one side of this room protected the stairway to the chambers above. On this triangular space was an array of screws placed at intervals to hold the various kinds and sizes of snuffers, scissors and shears the work of the house required. It was my grandmother's boast that she could find anything in her house in the dark, she had things arranged so orderly. If any of the scissors were inadvertently hung on the wrong screw, they had to be immediately changed. It seems to me there must have been at least a dozen of them when all were in place. She thought they were more stationery on screws than on nails.



In the corner near the dining room door was a shelf on which a water pail stood. Beneath it, on the floor, was the spot where the big milk pan was placed night and morning, filled with frothy strippings for the cats. One call brought a troop of them, each knowing its own name. Aunt Jule was very fond of cats, and had anywhere from one to twenty at a time . . . Cats were never allowed in the buttery or dining room. One of the true sayings of the house was "I'll have no cats around me who won't catch mice." This principle applied equally to cats and people. It was a busy place.

Almost always there were a few choice house plants, for it was impossible to have

them outside, for the hens, cats and "varmint" would destroy them if the numerous bugs did not. Hanging baskets of oxalis and star-of-Bethlehem were favorites.

The Butt'ry

Off the kitchen-living room was the butt'ry, used in the winter all the time and in the summer only when the cooking was going on. Many tasks were transferred to the shed or summer kitchen, being more roomy and cooler. The butt'ry was small and the woodwork was painted blue. The wooden sink beneath the window which faced the gulch was meticulously scraped every time it was used. The homemade scraper was a piece of iron with a wooden top. Beneath the sink stood a bench on which rested a nest of milk pans, and the earthen Norwalk tray which was used to hold quantities of "smearcase" or sour milk cheese. On the floor were crocks for doughnuts, cookies, biscuits, bread, sugar and flour. On two sides were shelves from floor to ceiling, on which were placed the dishes in orderly rows with special pieces standing behind them. The top shelf held pieces not in constant use, yet a part of the necessary equipment. The nest of pewter beakers was one of my special delights, as they ranged from thimble size to a quart. Back of the door were more shelves which held the extracts and cooking supplies, the heirloom dishes and many odd pieces of crockery and china. Big jugs of molasses and vinegar stood on the floor.

While cloth screens were tacked over the windows, constantly opening doors which had no screens made flies an ever-present pest. Several sets of half-spherical-shaped screens of varying sizes were used to set over pies, bowls, plates of food and fruit. In the summer kitchen there was a screen

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cupboard for food which also provided protection from insects and mice.

On one side of the butt'ry, the wood partition was covered with hangers for utensils which would not interfere with progress to the dish shelves. Towels made of clean grain sacks were generously used to cover open packages, recently cooked food and large pans of biscuits.

The Dining Room

Leading back from the living room was the dining room. I judge this was first intended for a bedroom when the house was built but as years advanced, customs changed and instead of eating in the kitchen, a dining room was considered desirable. It was not a large room, and in the years I knew it I saw at various times the walls papered in gay floral patterns and the paint changed from blue to pink to gray and back again to blue. The one window facing the gulch gave ample light. Originally there was a fireplace on one side but that was closed up before my earliest recollection. However the shelf and fireboard cupboard remained. It was in this cupboard that valuable papers were stored, and the little leather-covered trunk or chest was eventually found, containing fifty dollars in gold. The compass which my great-grandfather Benjamin Russell carried in the woods when hunting the Indians was lovingly treasured here, together with choice bits of china, souvenirs, and cartridges. The brass knobs on the two doors were hard to keep polished, and were finally painted over like the woodwork . . . The room was rather small and the table, spread to generous proportions, took up most of the available space, so that there was only room for the chairs and a small side-table in front of the old fireplace. The table was one of a pair made from a black cherry tree grown on the home farm. It was covered with a red checked table cloth over which was placed white tray cloths woven by my grandmother. The lumbermen who often got meals here were careless, as many tea stains can testify. My aunt used to have a special washing of all the tray cloths in the springtime when the apple trees were in blossom, and hang them in the orchard for several days and nights. It was her belief that some chemical action took place which removed many of the stains. My aunt would get the meals on the table, then call the men who had all been washing in the shed and

combing their hair in front of the mirror on the clock—"putting on the sunshine" they called it.

Everybody helped himself and when he was done came out of the dining room, went to the shed for a smoke or with an ever-present toothpick, discussed the affairs of the world in general or prophesied the weather. The last job before the meal for the hired man was to "wrestle with the one-arm jack" and get a big pitcher of water "from the north corner of the well." Cold water and hot tea were the usual drinks, except milk for children. Bowls of thick cream were on the table to be used on potatoes and fruits or desserts. The vegetables were raised on the farm, berries were abundant in season, and the meat or fish came from the farm, forest, or river. Salads were not in favor, but pies were on the table nearly every meal. Dried codfish, stripped off those hanging in the shed chamber, made a delectable dish cooked with cream and butter. Baked beans were a standard dish and always in favor.

When all the men had finished eating, the table was reset for my aunt and any other women in the house, and we enjoyed it as a family. Then while I did the table dishes my aunt would sit and take a "cat-nap" for a few minutes. She insisted on washing all the pots and pans and kettles, rinsing them first with a small amount of clear water, to put in the pig's pail, which was later augmented with potato peelings and orts of various kinds, together with certain kinds of meal to feed the pigs twice a day.

The walls of the dining room were without pictures, and the painted floor without a rug, but the window had a lace curtain and the place never looked bare.

The Milk Room

Back of the dining room, reached from both the parlor bedroom and the dining room, was another small square room called the milk room for which it was sometimes used, but ever after I can remember, it was used for a bedroom. Just large enough for a three-quarter spool bed, a double-decker bureau and chair, it usually had an occupant. One window faced the cow lane and the beginning of the mountain pasture. When the cows were turned out in the early morning the cow-bell passed the window and gave an alarm clock service. This was a cool spot in the summer, but frigid in the winter time. This no doubt was the reason



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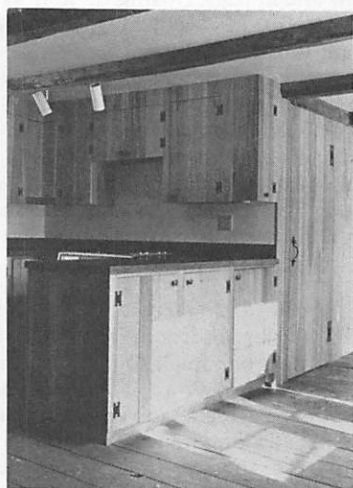
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for moving the shelves for the milk pans to the cellar.

The Parlor Bedroom

This was the second largest room in the house and was better furnished than any of the others and probably the least used. One door opened into the milk room but the one most used opened from the front entry at the right of the front door. The room was nearly square, although there was an angling partition on one side of the fireplace which added to the space there, but took some from the dining room. The fireplace was on the opposite side of the chimney from the kitchen and in all the years I went there, I never saw it open or in use. Whenever it was necessary to heat the room a small wood stove was set up with a funnel through the closed fireplace. The long narrow mantel held some plaster figures of painted fruit and flowers, and also some very nice glass vases. At one end of the shelf was a vase filled with a sheaf of wheat which did duty instead of flowers at a funeral, on which occasion it was tied with a royal purple ribbon, but ordinarily this was not in evidence. The other vase was filled with dried grasses of



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various kinds to form a bouquet. beneath the shelf was hung a glass bottle in the shape of a pair of bellows, as well as a real pair with painted sides. A nice brass warming pan also hung near, and in a corner stood several canes . . .

The room had an ingrain wool carpet with a red and green floral pattern, and in certain spots topped with drawn-in rugs. I remember a large fluffy rug in front of the bed made from yarn raveled from the lumbermen's discarded wool stockings which my aunt had washed, raveled, dyed and utilized in this way.

The bed was a maple four-poster, high, with live goose-feather mattresses and covered with a hand-knit counterpane. A set of little steps, carpeted on the two treads, stood beside the bed for the children to climb on to get into the billowy bed.

My father made a lounge with very handsome veneer panels along the side and head, and had it upholstered in Massachusetts. This occupied quite a space on one side of the room. Between the east windows there was a mahogany card table with swing top and pedestal base, which was usually covered with a lovely red wool shawl.

Beneath the swing top was a space where odds and ends seemed to collect. On the table rested a round basket in which there were many daguerreotypes of the family. The big family Bible and other books and photographs surrounded a glass globe containing brilliant stuffed birds.

The three windows had shades and lace curtains, and one corner of the room was curtained off for a closet as the old house had almost no closets except small ones around the chimney.

I recall three or four pictures in this room. The twin pictures of fluffy white kittens playing with blocks, and the familiar "asleep" and "awake" pictures which everyone had. There was an interesting picture of the Theological School at Andover, Mass. where my great-grandparents came from, and my grandmother Martha Russell Fifield's certificate of life membership in what is now the American Board of Foreign Missions of the Congregational Church.

There were several rocking chairs and footstools and a wash stand. It was a pleasant room and a haven of rest from the farm activities during the busy season. But it also



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had sad memories, for this was the resting place of the caskets containing the remains of ancestors of three generations, at the close of their lives . . .

The Front Entry

The front door, facing east, opened into a small square entry with the parlor bedroom on the right and the kitchen-living room on the left. Unlike many early houses, no stairway led from this entry, but instead the only stairway in the house led from the kitchen and did not follow the chimney. In this house, the living rooms downstairs surrounded the big square chimney which must have rested on the ground as I am sure it did not extend into the cellar.

The front entry was lighted by side lights at the door which reached halfway down and the little window sills, inside, were places to display geological specimens of the region, such as chunks of rose quartz, granite containing garnets, and similar objects. Souvenir shells were also there to remind one of trips to Casco Bay when commodities were taken to Portland.

Opposite the door were two high fire-board cupboards on the sloping sides of the chimney. In these were kept the best bonnets, gloves, bead bags and other handbags, veils and fancy accessories of many kinds.

In one corner, below these cupboards, was a covered padded box used as a chest for storage and also for a seat. In the other corner a shelf was fastened to the wall to make a tabletop, supported by one leg at the corner. Grandmother wove a white cloth to fit the shelf and to hang over on the two open sides, this being decorated with netting and fringe. On this cloth rested a lap-desk containing writing material and small odds and ends which were seldom used but needed occasionally. This entry was little used except as a passageway to the parlor bedroom and on social occasions such as funerals, when the front door was used.

The Shed or Summer Kitchen

I suppose the reason for calling this room the shed was because it became one in the winter season when it could not be used as a kitchen. The cold seasons were long and it was more often the shed than a kitchen, but my own experience with it was almost wholly in the summer, so I know it best as a kitchen.

When the house was built it seems likely this ell part did not exist, but was added later, using the first back door as an entrance to it, and another door was made to the dooryard reached by two stone steps. The top step was of hewn granite set above a big flat natural rock of a deep slate color and very smooth. This lower rock which was almost like a platform received a vigorous scrubbing with soapsuds and a broom very often and was a source of pride to my aunt who liked a neat entrance.

Another door with wooden steps led into the "open" shed and a flight of open stairs ascended to the shed chambers where sap buckets, butter firkins, wooden measures, egg boxes, snowshoes, sleigh bells and even dried codfish all found a home. The cats used this stairway more than the people, as the cathole from the unfinished chamber in the main house opened into the shed chamber. They roamed all over this part of the house but were not allowed to enter the buttery, dining room, or parlor bedroom.

The summer kitchen was a busy workroom from early morning until late at night. Here was hung a long row of lanterns which had to be cleaned every day; the milk pails to be washed and put out in the sun to air; the pails and kettles for the pig's feed which stood on a low bench; the churn standing over by the window; the barrel of meal located under the stairs; the screen cupboard ready to dispense or receive whole fleets of pies and literally bushels of mountain blueberries or cranberries in their season; the aqueduct of running water beside the wooden sink filled with floating cucumbers; the two-quart bumper dish on the edge, used many times a day to dip up cold water or bring hot water from the tank on the kitchen stove; the wooden box of soft soap back of the sink, lowered and filled with regularity; and stacks of dishes which came and went through the big dishpan in the sink. Iron kettles hung from beams and a deep spider filled with fat for frying "sinkers," covered when not in use, had a special corner shelf.

In later years a door was cut through to the rear, and a toilet built for the women so they would not have to go outdoors, but the men's toilet was in the pig house.

In spite of much traffic through the summer kitchen, the floor was scrubbed almost white, and except for wash days it was not a place of much confusion.

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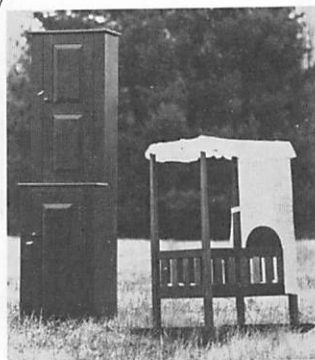
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The water supply was from a mountain brook which came down through the pasture back of the house, and was piped into the house through a long series of logs through which holes were bored, the pointed end of one log fitted into the large end of the next. The logs were laid in the ground deep enough so they did not freeze. In this way water was brought into the aqueduct in a continuous bubbling stream to fill the big box. The overflow was carried away to an outside trough for the cattle and horses. As the aqueduct was used so continuously for dipping it was not used for drinking water on the table. A pump in the open shed was the source of the drinking water.

Several steps led down from the summer kitchen to the open shed, and then two more long steps the length of the shed brought one to the ground. In the winter this was enclosed, leaving only an opening for a small door.

The Chambers

Narrow steep stairs arose from the kitchen to the unfinished or open chamber which went across the entire house. Doors led to two finished rooms, one at each end. Aunt Jule always slept in the south room which had a window facing the long string of buildings and the road . . . Her room had a sloping ceiling under which the spool bed stood. This was high and billowy with a tufted white counterpane. There was a lounge in the room, a wash stand and bureau, and little steps which she used for a footstool. The walls were papered with the woodwork painted blue. A large closet accommodated trunks, chests, and clothes. Her personal treasures were kept in her room.

The back chamber was used by the hired man and was very plain, furnished only with a bed, chair, and bureau. A closet took care of his belongings.

The open chamber also had a bed, sometimes two, in the back part where farm hands slept during haying time or whenever the house was full of people. The home-woven blankets were the usual counterpanes on these beds.

Outbuildings

There were several outhouses, one being the pig or hog house where porkers were fed and housed. It was between the shed and the barn, but nearer the latter. This had once

been a log dwelling down on the flat below the Picked Knoll . . .

The "old" barn, nearest the house, was used for the horses, cattle, hens and the storage of hay. Beyond this was the "new" barn which also had stanchions but was used only occasionally for cattle, except young calves. Hay was stored in it, and the threshing machines were at the far end of the floor, also a winnowing machine for processing large quantities of beans. Beans were a staple food. There was seldom a time when a couple of beanpots were not in the oven of the efficient Banner stove, and the product was considered an excellent food . . .

The house cellar was very small, being only under the big family room. The stairs were located under those going to the chambers, with the door near the buttery, although just inside the kitchen. On the under side of the chamber stairs were shelves where food was kept cool between meals, but the butter and milk were carried down the ladder-like steps into the cellar more often than I like to remember. In this little cellar were tiers of shelves for milk pans from which was skimmed the heavy cream for the table and for churning; apple, cider and vinegar barrels were conveniently placed, and bins for potatoes and root vegetables. Jars of canned fruits were there in abundance and big crocks of pickles. Jugs of molasses, cranberries and blueberries were tucked into every available corner. It was always a mystery to me how so many things could be stored in such a small place.

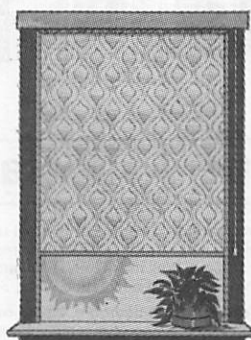
Several years after the house burned down, I visited the spot and located the cellar hole. Again I was amazed at its smallness. Anyone not having seen the house would never imagine it to have the dimensions it really had. I could not find the big door-rock or the front door granite steps. The well was filled with debris, the orchard neglected and all but gone. A few currant bushes survived in the garden. All the buildings were gone except the corn barn which somehow escaped the fire. The fields which had been cultivated for years had all grown up to bushes, and almost nothing remained to remind one of a productive farm except the hardened wheel ruts and the family graveyard. □

*Written by the late Martha Fifiield Wilkins in 1945, edited by Randall H. Bennett, the book **Sunday River Sketches**, is full of tales of the Bethel-Newry area. It can be found at Books-n-Things, Norway.*



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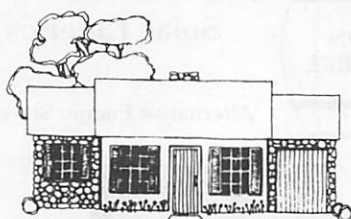
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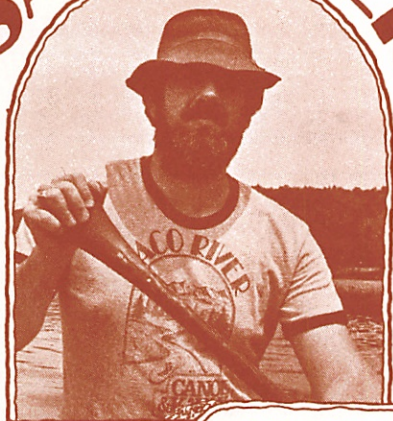
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